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PHILIP LYNDON'S TROUBLES.

BY
EDITH OWEN BOURNE.

Man-like is it to fall into sin,
Fiend-like is it to dwell therein,
Christ-like is it for sin to grieve,
God-like is it all sin to leave.

LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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PHILIP LYNDON'S TROUBLES.



CHAPTER I.

PHILIP'S DISCOVERY.

‘Back, as a hand that pushes thro’ the leaf
To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew.’

TENNYSON.

‘THE gentleman who has succeeded Mr. Howard is a Mr. Lyndon,’ observed George Mansfield to his mother one evening, as the family were sitting in the drawing-room.

‘Indeed! Do you know anything of him, George?’

‘I knew Philip Lyndon when he was at college.’

‘He is a young man, then?’

‘Yes, but his father is associated with him

in the business, Scott tells me. Lyndon was a jolly sort of fellow.'

Mrs. Mansfield was an elegant-looking woman. The expression of her countenance was remarkably prepossessing. Her face wore the pallid hue of feeble health, and her hair was of a silvery whiteness. Her son, whom she had addressed as George, was a good-looking young man of about eight-and-twenty. He bore a considerable resemblance to his mother, but more in feature than in expression, though that gave evidence of habitual good-humour, and of no deficiency of firmness. His brother Stanton, who was sitting near the window reading, was a few years younger, and not so good-looking.

'I am not very fond of a jolly fellow, especially for a surgeon,' observed Mrs. Mansfield.

'Well, you know, medical students are rather apt to be——'

'Something like you, I suppose,' thought Stanton, as his brother paused for a word.

'Lyndon may have sown his wild oats by this time,' continued George, with a slight though rather peculiar smile.

'Lyndon!' exclaimed Harry, a delicate-looking boy of about fifteen, who was stretched upon the sofa. 'That was the name of one of my

schoolfellows—Tom Lyndon. What is this man's name ?

‘ Did you not hear me say that it was Philip ?’

‘ Then he must be Tom's brother, for he used to talk about Phil. That will be jolly ; you'll have to have him, mother, for old Wood is such a muff.’

‘ I should not like to have *him*, certainly,’ observed Mrs. Mansfield.

‘ I think that you had better, notwithstanding,’ said George.

‘ I'll go round and see if I can see anything of Tom,’ said Harry, jumping up from the sofa with more alacrity than he usually displayed.

‘ It will be a good thing for Harry to have a companion whom he takes to, that is if he is suitable,’ observed Mrs. Mansfield, as the boy left the room.

‘ That remains to be seen,’ replied George. ‘ From what I knew of Philip Lyndon, when he was a student,’ he continued, ‘ I should object strongly to have him attending here. I happened to come to the knowledge of some facts which would have ruined him for life had they become known.’

‘ In that case it will be better, decidedly, to have Mr. Wood,’ replied his mother ; and so it was settled.

Harry took his way along the Walks until he came to the familiar gates. They stood wide open, and inside was a waggon, which some men were engaged in packing. Mr. Howard having died away from home, his widow had sent orders for the furniture to be taken away directly, to make room for her husband's successor.

Philip Lyndon was sitting at his desk, looking through the books belonging to the business. His figure was strong and finely formed. The rich brown of his complexion, his dark hair and beard, and his handsome features, gave him a decidedly striking appearance, while every line of his countenance showed energy and power of character, and a nature which betokened a great capability, both of affection and of passion. He had gone over several pages when his eye fell upon the name of Mansfield. He started, and a dark frown gathered on his brow. He looked at the book no more, but sat quite still, with his head leaning on his hand.

In the meantime Master Tom, a dark-eyed brown-cheeked boy of about fourteen, after letting off the effervescence of his spirits by a scamper round the Walks, had ensconced himself on a packing-case in the yard, where he

sat whistling and kicking the sides of the case, watching with very great interest the operations of the men. On seeing Harry Mansfield, he jumped down, thinking that he was some one inquiring for his brother ; but, on recognising his school friend, he hastened to him with a hearty greeting.

They had just mounted on the packing-case, when the first large drops of a shower of rain began to fall, of which Tom took little heed. Harry, however, not being so robust as his companion, suggested that a shelter would be desirable.

‘We had better go into the surgery,’ Tom said ; ‘I think Phil is not there.’

Phil was there, however ; and as the two boys entered, he looked round with such a scowl in his dark eyes, that Tom and Harry beat a hasty retreat. By turning up the packing-case, however, and creeping inside, they found a shelter from the rain.

‘So that is Phil, is it ?’ said Harry, when they were comfortably settled. ‘What makes him look so savage ?’

‘Oh, I don’t know. Something has put him out, I suppose.’

‘Does he often look like that ?’

‘Oh yes, when he is vexed. But I have

not seen much of him, you know, for a long time, with his having been away in India. He had to come home when father was ill, to see after the business.'

'I thought you were to stay at school longer,' said Harry.

'Well, so I was, but you see I didn't;' and Tom concluded his lucid explanation by whistling.

'Nobody is ever cross at our house, not even George,' observed Harry, upon whom the frown on Philip Lyndon's face had produced a strong impression.

'What a blessing!' cried Tom, energetically. 'Shouldn't I like to live there!'

'How jolly it is that you are here!' said Harry. 'You must come and see me, Tom.'

'All right, I'll come some day. But you had better come here oftenest, because you can see me without ringing and all that fuss.'

'I shan't come here much if your brother looks so cross,' replied Harry.

'Oh, you need not mind him; he'll take no notice of you.'

At this moment Philip's clear sharp tones were heard ringing out his brother's name, and Tom scrambled out of his hiding-place precipitately, and went into the surgery; while Harry,

thankful that his friend had to go instead of himself, came to the conclusion that, under the circumstances, it would be advisable to make himself scarce with all convenient speed, which he accordingly did.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST MEETING.

‘A countenance in which did meet
 Sweet records, promises as sweet ;
 A creature not too bright or good
 For human nature’s daily food,
 For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
 Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

* * * * *

And yet a spirit still, and bright
 With something of an angel light.’

WORDSWORTH.

PHILIP, having set his brother some writing to do, with strict injunctions to be quick about it, took his way down the Walks towards the bottom of the town ; his face was not so dark as it had been, though his brow was contracted still. The rain, which had for a time abated, suddenly increased into a shower. Philip had just turned a corner of the avenue when he met Harry and a lady ; he did not recognise

the youth who had lately retired so hastily from his presence, for he had scarcely seen him on that occasion ; his attention now was directed exclusively towards the lady, who, in her thin summer dress, was quite unprotected from the wet, the trees at this point not affording much shelter, as the rain came slanting between their trunks. The lady was scarcely of the middle height, and of a graceful figure ; her features were of a pure and delicate beauty ; her complexion of an almost marble paleness, with just a faint tinge of colour on the cheek ; and her hair of a soft light brown. But the loveliness of the expression of her face was what most struck Philip ; there was in it the ‘might of gentleness,’ and a kind of softened radiance, as of some holy light within. She looked as if passion and sin could not approach her pure whiteness.

Philip instantly begged her acceptance of his umbrella, which she at first refused, saying that they should soon be at home ; but on his urging it, she consented, thanking him, and turning round, as he was passing on, to inquire where she should send it. Philip walked on like one in a dream. It seemed as if he had been waiting through long years of darkness for that sweet face to dispel the gloom around

him. He thought that with such an angel at his side, life must be blessed. She would shed peace and hope over the stormy clouds which shrouded his path, and made it lie so blank and desolate before him ; and yet—what could she have to do with such as he ?

‘ You need not have asked him where to send it, Cousin Blanche,’ said Harry, as they walked on, ‘ for I knew that he was the new doctor, Mr. Lyndon ;’ and he proceeded to tell what had happened at the surgery, concluding with the remark that ‘ he has soon got over his ill-humour, however, for he looked uncommonly pleasant when he gave us the umbrella.’

When they reached Mrs. Mansfield’s, Harry had to relate over again the history of his reception by Mr. Lyndon, and also to tell of their subsequent meeting with that gentleman, on account of which Blanche had to run the gauntlet of a little bantering.

‘ Lyndon seems to be very much like what he used to be,’ observed George. ‘ He could be very amiable when he liked, and when he did not, he was intensely disagreeable.’

Several days passed, and Philip saw nothing of the unknown lady ; and as, when the umbrella was returned, the servant had not caught the name of the sender, he was obliged

to wait for an opportunity of obtaining further information. It was possible, indeed, that she might be some visitor in the town whom he would never see again. With regard to the other subject which occupied his thoughts, there was no need of exercising the same reticence; and he heard the Mansfields spoken of as a wealthy family of high standing and great estimation in the town, and George was considered to be the principal lawyer of the neighbourhood. Philip determined to keep out of his way as much as he possibly could.

Although the Mansfields had been patients of Mr. Howard, it was very unlikely that he would be summoned to attend them. Philip comforted himself with the reflection that such would be the case. To be in the same town with Mansfield would be bad enough, but to visit at the house, even only in a professional capacity, would, he felt, be little less than intolerable.

Philip was considerably annoyed, when Tom, in the exuberance of his joy, dilated on the delights which Harry Mansfield's companionship would bring. He had often heard his brother speak of Harry as his schoolfellow, but had never inquired where he came from, concluding that it was from H——, where the Mansfields

had been living when he was acquainted with George.

Tom, since his first interview with Harry, had not obtained even a glimpse of that young gentleman, who had been kept at home by a cold. Tom had discovered that the Mansfields lived in the prettiest house in the Walks, with innumerable angles and gables and ornamental chimney-stacks. He had walked past the house several times, but he had not ventured inside the gate, though he had climbed on to it, and had taken stock of the garden, as far as the masses of flowering shrubs and trellised arches of tangled creepers and climbing roses would allow ; but he had not been able to discover the object of his search. He had not had much time to give to his investigations, for Philip kept him pretty constantly employed ; everything having been left in great disorder, owing to Mr. Howard's failing health ; and when not wanted in the surgery, Tom had been in great request in the house, helping his sister to put up curtains, and to nail down carpets, and doing the thousand and one little things in which a boy's active hands are useful. His sister was generally kind and patient with him ; but Philip had been cross and uncertain in his manner, and very exacting in his requirements.

CHAPTER III.

THE LYNDONS.

‘All feared the father’s rule ; beneath his frown
Mirth died, and fiery passions sprung to life.’

ANON.

‘Be off into the surgery, Tom, and do what I told you,’ said Philip, authoritatively, one morning, as he pushed back his chair from the breakfast-table.

Tom finished his breakfast hastily and departed.

‘Don’t be hard upon him, Philip,’ said Fanny Lyndon, a pretty brunette, her countenance sparkling with animation and good-temper.

‘I shall not be hard upon him, if he works well and is not obstinate.’

‘He is not idle, I am sure,’ replied his sister ; ‘and he will not be obstinate if you are gentle with him, but he is high-spirited.’

‘ Oh, a little taming will do him good !’

‘ It would do you no harm.’

Philip did not deign to notice his sister’s observation, and she continued :

‘ Now that we are in a fresh place, Philip, I think we ought to try to make a new beginning, and have things on rather a different footing.’

‘ You had better preach to my father,’ was his somewhat ungracious answer.

‘ It is of no use talking to him,’ replied Fanny ; ‘ and not much to you, I am afraid,’ she thought. ‘ If *you* will turn over a new leaf, Philip, it will be something,’ she said aloud.

‘ How can I turn over a new leaf, with Mansfield here ?’ he thought.

‘ If we both pull one way we may do something,’ she continued ; ‘ but if you spend a sovereign while I save a shilling, what good shall I do ?’

‘ You are a fine one to save,’ he replied, a little scornfully.

‘ Well, I have had no encouragement. If you will stand by me, I will try ; but if you won’t, we must each go on our own way, or rather, I will go mine, and you will go my father’s.’

‘ I shall not go *his* way,’ he replied almost fiercely.

‘ You seem to me to have made a beginning

when you were at college,' said Fanny. 'I don't want to preach, as you call it, Philip; but I do wish you would be different.'

She glanced anxiously at him, but the expression of his face was not very promising.

'When is my father coming?' he asked.

'He said that he would come when we were straight.'

'He may stay away as long as he likes, as far as I am concerned,' he muttered.

Fanny mused for a few minutes with a thoughtful face.

'Philip,' she said, at length, 'I hope that you will never be such that those in your home will dread to see you.'

His face grew dark as night; he started up from his chair and left the room.

'How altered he is,' thought Fanny, with a sigh. 'When he was a boy, he used to be more like Tom, though he was always very passionate; but now there is no speaking to him. I am afraid Tom will have but a poor chance between him and my father.'

Mrs. Lyndon had married, when little more than a schoolgirl, the dashing young surgeon who, on her father's health failing, had become his partner, and into whose character her friends had taken no trouble to inquire. She had soon

discovered that her husband's good looks and his abilities were his only recommendations, and that his temper was both tyrannical and violent. Worn out by ill-usage and neglect, the effects of which had been aggravated by domestic difficulties, and the requirements of the position which her husband insisted on maintaining at all hazards, she at length had sunk broken-hearted into an early grave. Many were the tears which were shed by the dying mother, and fervent were her prayers for the three children whom she left behind her. The two younger ones, a merry maiden of five, and little Tom, a toddling rogue of little more than a year, were confided to the care of a faithful servant, the daughter of an old dependent of her father's, who had promised her dying mistress that she would never leave the children. Faithfully had that promise been fulfilled, through many a difficulty and discouragement. Her eldest son, a daring resolute boy of twelve, Mrs. Lyndon was obliged to leave, with many a melancholy foreboding of his future fate, in the hands of his selfish and unprincipled father. The constantly recurring struggles between these two had embittered the last years of her life, for Mr. Lyndon was determined to break the spirit of his son, while the boy resisted his

father's tyranny with a determined obstinacy which seemed almost beyond his years.

All the children had inherited the affectionate nature of their mother, and though high-spirited, might, by judicious management, have been trained into tolerable obedience to law and order. Philip's affection for his mother had attained almost the absorbing devotion of a passion, and it seemed to be the only restraining influence which the wilful and headstrong boy could be brought to obey.

Over the two little ones Jane held undisputed sway, and she brought them up with a conscientious devotion which, as far as it went, left little to be desired. There were many things, however, which were quite out of the range of Jane's sphere ; but which, nevertheless, constituted a very necessary part of the home education of the children, and which, as they gradually came more under their father's influence, showed where lay the deficiency. Fanny's mind became centred in the gay company which frequented her father's house. Dressing, visiting, and flirting were the pursuits which absorbed her thoughts and occupied her time ; while the end and aim of Master Tom's existence seemed to be mischief. Fortunately for him, he was early sent to a good

boarding-school, which he left, with great regret, not long before the removal of the family to D——. It was true that though, at school, the various scrapes which he got into brought their inevitable punishment—that might be calculated upon, and was proportioned to the offence; while at home he often incurred the severest chastisement for the most trifling misdeeds, the chastisement being determined by the temper and the mood at the moment of the chastiser.

At school, the restless activity with which Master Tom was endued found its legitimate scope in the games, and in the intercourse with the other boys; while his good mental powers, and a moderate thirst for knowledge, caused his hours of study to be a source of pleasure to him, rather than a weariness. Tom's good temper and frankness, to say nothing of the skill and activity which he displayed in all kinds of games, made him a general favourite in the school; but the companion between whom and himself there existed the greatest degree of intimacy was Harry Mansfield, who was a little older than himself, and of a much more gentle and quiet disposition. It was with great delight, therefore, that Tom, who was away from home, on a visit to one of his school-

fellows, when the arrangement was made, received a letter from his sister, saying that he must repair to D—— in a few days to join his brother, who was going there to take charge of the new business.

Philip, after his conversation with his sister, went into the surgery to superintend Tom's work. He was in no humour to make allowances for carelessness or inattention, and Tom soon came to disgrace, was scolded, and marched out of the surgery in a temper. He came back again, however, in a little while, looking rather obstinate. Philip, being busy with some patients, took no notice of him, except to tell him to make up some medicine, which he was engaged in doing, when there was a tap at the door, and who should be there but Harry Mansfield. He had brought a request for Mr. Lyndon to come directly to see his mother. Harry rushed off the moment he had delivered his message, being possessed by a wholesome fear of Mr. Lyndon's frowns.

Philip dismissed his patients, and walked out of the surgery like one in a dream. It was very strange that he should be sent for to go there. George Mansfield must know who he was. Perhaps he was not at home, in which case it was according to the natural order of

things that Mr. Howard's successor should be summoned.

The expression on Philip's face, as he walked up to Mrs. Mansfield's door, was not exactly an amiable one. While the servant conducted him upstairs, however, he had time to assume a suitable demeanour. As he entered Mrs. Mansfield's room, he beheld the invalid, apparently in a state of great exhaustion; and beside the bed stood the young lady whom he had met in the Walks. He was a little puzzled by the expression of her face. It was not that exactly of surprise, neither did she look as if she expected to see him. He had no time, however, at that moment, to attempt to analyse it. A curious feeling of calmness and of contentment seemed to come over him, even though the thought that she might be George Mansfield's sister was by no means a pleasant one.

'Blanche, my dear, you will tell how I am,' said Mrs. Mansfield, who had been roused by Philip's entrance.

Blanche proceeded to give him an account of the sudden illness of the invalid, whom she spoke of as her aunt. The young lady was not then George Mansfield's sister, a discovery which was a great relief to Philip, though it was unfortunate enough that she should be his

cousin. It was pleasant to see how her countenance brightened when Philip told her, that though her aunt's attack was a sharp one, he hoped that it would soon pass off. He then proceeded to inquire whether Miss Blanche had sustained any injury from her wetting, ascertaining with great satisfaction that she had not. After giving some directions, he departed, with her image still before his eyes.

When Mrs. Mansfield was taken ill, the servants in their alarm had despatched Harry for the doctor, and he naturally had gone where he had been in the habit of going on similar occasions. He had met Blanche as he ran out; she, having found her aunt not very well on the previous evening, was coming to inquire after her. Harry had gone on to the office to tell his brother of his mother's sudden illness. Blanche had inquired at once of the servants as to what surgeon had been sent for; and she was still in uncertainty, when Philip, by his appearance, gave the answer to the query. The next question which presented itself to her mind was, what would George say to their proceedings? Her reflections were interrupted by a tap at the door, and on opening it, there stood Harry. She came out to him.

‘How was it that you went for Mr. Lyndon

Harry?' she asked; 'George had decided to have Mr. Wood.'

'Well, nobody told me, and I never thought about it. I'm sure *I* don't want him—he looks so cross. Suppose I tell Tom that it was a mistake, and Tom would tell him, and then he need not come again?'

'No. That will not do,' replied Blanche, smiling.

'Well, I dare say Tom would not like to tell him. I am sure *I* should not,' observed Harry.

When George and Stanton came in to dinner, Blanche told them of the mistake. George looked more vexed than she ever remembered to have seen him, while Stanton laughed.

'What a stupid trick of Harry!' said George. 'You may all have him if you like, for anything I care; but *I* don't mean to be doctored by him, I can tell you.'

'It was not my doing, George,' replied Blanche, surprised at his manner; 'and the responsibility, whatever it may be, does not rest with me.'

When Harry met Tom later in the evening, he informed his friend of the mistake that he had made in not going for Mr. Wood.

'Why weren't you to go for Phil?' asked Tom.

‘I don’t know, exactly; because of something that George said, I believe.’

Tom mused. He knew that his father did many things that were wrong; perhaps Phil did too, and they had heard of it, and that was how it was. He considered that it was not at all to the credit of the family to lose a patient that Mr. Howard had had.

‘Will they keep on with Phil, do you think?’ he asked,

‘Yes, I suppose so. My cousin Blanche said that it would not do to tell him not to come.’

Tom thought that was very sensible of Cousin Blanche. When he reached home he imparted the news of Harry’s mistake to Fanny, who felt somewhat troubled about it. She thought that it augured ill for her brother’s success that he had so nearly lost one of Mr. Howard’s best families. She considered herself in duty bound to tell Philip, that he might be on his guard, or, that at any rate, he might not be taken un-awares by any adverse turn of fortune. She was surprised at the cloud which gathered on his face at her intelligence. He asked no questions, but marched off into the surgery.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER MEETING.

‘Long years had passed : we met again,
But time his hatred had not soothed.’

ANON. .

ON Philip's second visit to Mrs. Mansfield, he was shown into the drawing-room, where sat George, reading the newspaper. George rose as he entered.

‘So you are here,’ said he.

‘Yes, I am here,’ replied Philip.

The manner of the one was insolent and overbearing ; that of the other expressed a kind of resolute endurance. They stood for a few minutes gazing at each other. Each took the measure of the other, and each realised where the other's power lay, and in what consisted his own weakness, though neither knew exactly how much this weakness would put him in

his enemy's power. Mansfield's eyes had a cold hard glitter in them; they were at once wily and audacious. The expression of Lyndon's face was that of a determined and fierce defiance. His eyes shone like glowing coals, and he gave the impression of a man whom it would be dangerous to drive to bay. The lawyer's eyes were the first to seek the floor. There was an awkward pause, which was broken by the servant who came to conduct Lyndon upstairs.

'He won't bear much goading,' thought Mansfield, as the door closed behind the young surgeon. 'I shall have to be cautious how I deal with him.'

The passage from the door of the drawing-room to that of Mrs. Mansfield's room was sadly too short for Philip, after the state of excitement in which he had been, to have time to bring his manner to that calm self-possession so necessary in the presence of the sick. Could he have paused a few moments before entering the room it would have given him a chance; but the servant opened the door and announced his name, and he must walk forward. What a contrast was presented by that quiet room, with its shaded lamp and the gentle presence of her who watched there, to the tumult in his

soul ! The invalid seemed to be dozing, and Blanche spoke to Philip in low, soft tones, which fell soothingly upon his ear. He drank in the sweetness of the sounds, but missed their meaning until Blanche roused him by saying :

‘ You are not attending to what I am telling you, Mr. Lyndon.’

This brought Philip to his senses.

‘ I beg your pardon,’ he said.

He then bent his mind to the business in hand, and was able to pronounce Mrs. Mansfield, who was now awake, to be a little better. Outside the door he encountered Stanton. He started, thinking at first that it was George, but one glance at the face showed him that he was mistaken.

What a contrast the two faces presented in their expression, although the colour of the hair and that of the eyes, and also the general contour of the features, were so similar ! Stanton’s face had a straightforward kindly look, and his manner a manly simplicity, which won Philip’s confidence at once ; and he was glad to give him a better account of his mother.

Blanche sat still after Lyndon had gone downstairs, reflecting that the new doctor had something very peculiar about him. She could

not help thinking that his manner had given some colour to her aunt's report of what George had said of him. Her meditations were interrupted by Mrs. Mansfield's asking how it was that they had not got Mr. Wood, and the mistake had to be explained.

'I am sorry that it has happened so,' observed Mrs. Mansfield, 'because I am afraid that George will be annoyed, and if he be what George says he is, it would have been better not to have had him. However, I hope George is mistaken, and perhaps the young man is altered since those days.'

Blanche could not help thinking that a little more alteration would be an improvement, but she kept her reflections to herself. During the night she watched alternately with Stanton, who was like a woman in a sick-room, so gentle was he, and so watchful of the least movement of the invalid.

Blanche, during her vigil, often found her thoughts wandering in the direction of Philip Lyndon. There was something in his manner which puzzled her, and she tried in vain to frame some supposition which could account for it. She felt a little distrust of George, and his representation of Mr. Lyndon's character might be exaggerated; still, he did not seem

altogether an unlikely man to have indulged in what is called a fast kind of life, and yet she could not help thinking that there was in him a capability of something better.

When Philip left Mrs. Mansfield's, he proceeded to pay the remainder of his visits, and then, after concluding his work in the surgery, he went into the consulting-room, locked the door and, sitting down at the table, leaned his head upon his hands. Regret, remorse, a gloom nearly amounting to despair, and a determined resoluteness, almost as if he would compel destiny itself to give way to him, succeeded each other in his countenance. Occasionally he started up and paced the room, sitting down in the same position as before. Thus the hours of darkness wore away, and the first beams of the morning sunshine were streaming in through the window as he went to his own room; but it was impossible to sleep.

The bell was ringing for church when he came down to breakfast. He found his sister ready dressed, and his father, who had arrived on the previous evening, stood smoothing his hat in the hall. Philip, after a hasty breakfast, went to Mrs. Mansfield's, where he saw no one but his patient and Miss Ainslie; and then, with

a countenance over whose gloom shone the dawn of a new hope, he rode, on that quiet Sunday morning, through the pleasant lanes, with the overarching trees shaded with the changing tints of autumn.

‘Well,’ said Stanton, when the Mansfields were in the drawing-room after dinner. ‘Whatever young Lyndon may be, I should think that he is a great improvement on his father.’

‘He is not so old as his father,’ replied George, meaningly.

‘You mean that he will get older and worse, I suppose,’ said Stanton; ‘but I don’t see that that is an inference.’

‘You may not see it,’ was the reply. ‘Were the Lyndons at church, then?’

‘There was an elderly gentleman in Mr. Howard’s pew, and a young lady; so I concluded that they were the Lyndons.’

‘What did Miss Lyndon look like?’ asked Blanche.

‘She is dark, and decidedly handsome,’ was Stanton’s reply.

‘I wonder whether she will help in the school,’ observed Blanche.

‘Most likely not,’ replied George. ‘I should think they are not good sort of people,’ he

added with a sneer, but whether at the Lyndons or at good people in general did not appear.

‘We shall have to find that out when we know a little more of them,’ said Blanche.

CHAPTER V.

THE CURATE.

‘Ye breathe but accusation vast and vague,
Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If ye know,
Set up the charge ye know, to stand or fall.’

TENNYSON.

DURING the following week Blanche accompanied her brother in a call upon the Lyndons. The Rev. Reginald Ainslie was a tall, good-looking man. In his features he bore an exaggerated resemblance to his sister, but the expression of his face, though pleasant upon the whole, was less gentle and more rigid. Miss Lyndon was the only one whom they found at home. She was lively and pleasant, and received them with the air of one who was used to society, but she evidently did not quite feel her ground. Mr. Ainslie was courteous

and polite, but Blanche was the only one who was at all at ease, and she felt a little hampered by the constraint of the others. She gave a hint about the Sunday-school, but Fanny showed some caution on the subject. She made no rash promises, but said that possibly she might take a class when they were a little more settled.

‘I don’t think *that* young lady will be much help to us,’ observed the curate as they left the house.

‘I am not so sure,’ replied Blanche; ‘I think there is more in her than appears at first sight.’

‘Well, I shall leave her to you. You may bring her into harness if you can, but I don’t think they are our sort.’

‘There is a boy of about fourteen who looks as if he might be rather nice, and Harry likes him very much. He was at church on Sunday evening with his sister.’

‘Boys are not much good,’ observed Reginald. ‘They are generally more plague than profit.’

‘Harry is not.’

‘No; but Harry is rather different from most of them,’ replied her brother. ‘I don’t think that these Lyndons will be of much use to us,’ he continued; ‘and, from what I hear, they

seem to have brought a kind of atmosphere with them which is not altogether pleasant.'

At this moment they came upon Philip at the corner of the street. He raised his hat very politely to Blanche, and favoured the curate with a very scrutinising glance, while that gentleman surveyed him with a somewhat critical air.

'That is young Lyndon, I conclude, by his resemblance to his sister,' observed Reginald. 'He is not our sort, I can see.'

'Mr. Philip and you will not suit each other, I am sure,' thought Blanche.

'H'm ; her brother, I suppose,' said Philip to himself, as he walked on. 'He's every inch a clergyman.'

He fell into such a profound meditation on the subject, that he passed the house at which he intended to call, and had to retrace his steps when he found out his mistake.

As soon as Mrs. Mansfield was well enough she called at Mr. Lyndon's. She, like Blanche, rather took a fancy to Fanny, but she was not favourably impressed with Mr. Lyndon, though he was very courteous, and had none of that abruptness of manner which was sometimes observable in his son.

Fanny had to make most of her return calls

alone, for she could seldom get her father to accompany her, and Philip was too busy; besides, he said that he saw enough of the people when he was obliged to visit them. When Fanny had returned Blanche's call she had signified her willingness to take a class in the school. The truth was that she was rather dull. She had not had time to form many friendships, and she had little interchange of feeling with, or sympathy from, any one at home except Tom, and he was generally either busy or else with Harry Mansfield. Philip was restless and unsettled, and not inclined for any communion with his sister, and the only way of keeping the peace with Mr. Lyndon was to say as little to him as possible. An acquaintance with the curate's sister seemed to offer the companionship she sought, and the surest way of cultivating this intimacy would be, she thought, to help Blanche in the objects which she seemed to have so much at heart.

Fanny's attendance at the Sunday-school brought her every week in contact with Stanton Mansfield. She had been much struck with his quiet concentration on his work, while her attention was distracted by everything around her. Though she could not absolutely accuse him of discourtesy, he had taken no trouble to

make himself agreeable, and had let slip many opportunities on which pleasant little attentions might very properly have been given ; and the young lady had felt considerably piqued in consequence. Her manner to him had been very variable, actuated as it had been by a wish, sometimes to make him feel ashamed of his culpable negligence, and at others to charm him into the desired behaviour. Whether he had noted the changes in her manner, and had guessed their cause, or whether he was as unobservant as he seemed, she had no means of knowing. In any case, it was mortifying not to be able to make any impression upon him, and Miss Fanny had made up her mind to try some different tactics as soon as she should have a chance. In the meantime she did not hesitate to make known her opinion that Mr. Stanton Mansfield was ‘rather a stupid young man,’ an announcement which called forth a vigorous defence of him on the part of Master Tom.

‘You see, Reginald,’ said Blanche, one Sunday evening when she and her brother, as they usually did, had accompanied the Mansfields home after the evening service, ‘Miss Lyndon comes to school very regularly.

‘It is all fresh yet,’ replied her brother ; ‘but I am afraid that she will not keep it up.’

‘I think she will. She will become interested in her work.’

Reginald shook his head doubtfully.

‘We shall see,’ observed George, ominously.

‘It’s too bad of both of you,’ remonstrated Blanche, a little indignantly. ‘Why do you smile, Stanton? You are not against Miss Lyndon, too, are you?’

‘I was only smiling at your championship,’ was the reply. ‘I am not against her, I am sure.’

‘Perhaps her pretty face has enlisted you on her side,’ said George.

‘I don’t know that I am on her side particularly; but it is the best not to judge too hastily.’

‘None of the Lyndons are much good,’ observed George.

‘That’s not fair, George,’ said Blanche; ‘Miss Lyndon and Tom are both very nice, I am sure.’

‘I am sure Tom is a capital fellow,’ interposed Harry. ‘At school no fellow would have thought of accusing him of a lie, or a mean action.’

‘That is a good character, at any rate,’ observed Reginald.

‘I must say I like Tom very much,’ said Stanton. ‘He seems to me to be ingenuous and straightforward.’

‘I think, George, that you are wrong in

stating that the Lyndons are no good,' observed Reginald, reprovngly. 'I cannot say that I am fascinated by them, but they ought to have justice. The report of Mr. Lyndon's character appears to have accompanied him, and you say that you know of facts greatly to Mr. Philip's disadvantage; but with regard to Miss Lyndon and the boy, we have merely impressions derived from a very slight acquaintance to guide us, and must accordingly suspend our judgment for the present.'

'You may suspend it altogether if you like,' replied George, carelessly.

'And I think, in young Lyndon's case,' continued Reginald, 'that it would be better to state openly what you know about him, than to be always talking against him as you do.'

'I must use my own judgment in the matter,' answered George, sharply.

'Of course,' replied Reginald. 'I merely wish to state what appears to me to be right. To make a definite charge, and give a man a chance of disproving it, seems to me to be fairer than to make vague insinuations.'

'But suppose he cannot disprove it?'

'Then he must be content to be considered a fool, or a villain, or whatever it may be that the course of his actions has indicated.'

CHAPTER VI.

BLANCHE'S DISCOVERY.

‘Methinks he looks as though he were in love.’
SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Mrs. Mansfield was driving out, or sitting in the Walks with Blanche or Harry for company, it was quite wonderful how often they saw Mr. Philip, when he would stop for a minute or two for a chat. Mrs. Mansfield said that he certainly was very attentive; she supposed that he was anxious to secure his practice, and to make a favourable impression. Blanche could not help thinking that it was singular how frequently she met him. As a matter of course he often overtook her and her brother in their walks, and he turned up in all sorts of unexpected places. On Sunday afternoon, when they came from school, he was sure to

meet them, and often in the evening on coming out of church, or on their way to or from a class or school practising, when Reginald would remark that he thought there must be a great deal of illness, as they were always meeting the doctor. Blanche began to think that this could not be all accidental, and when alone she took to varying her route a little; though, as Victoria Terrace was on the Walks, she had not much opportunity.

Philip was at fault for a short time, and then he followed suit, but she fancied that he exercised a little more caution; perhaps he thought that she was trying to avoid him. Blanche, indeed, was not very well pleased with her discovery. She felt that he was a kind of man whose attention she could not possibly encourage, and she did not wish to have to repel him. Indeed, she feared, from his determined character, that it would be very difficult to keep him at a distance, and that she was very likely to be subjected to unpleasantness on his account. She felt a kind of shrinking from him, partly on account of the impression which he had given of his ungoverned temper, and partly because there was some mystery about him, which would be the best left in the oblivion which shrouded it.

Philip was soon able to cheer his sister with the assurance that his practice promised to be a very remunerative one ; indeed he was busy from morning to night, for Mr. Lyndon never visited a patient, except by particular request, so that the whole conduct of the business devolved upon his son. That gentleman, however, in the midst of his avocations, found time to waste many a precious afternoon in dodging about after Miss Ainslie. That was, indeed, the only way in which he could see her. No one was ill at Mrs. Mansfield's, and he felt an invincible repugnance to any attempt to get up an acquaintance with the curate ; neither could he go to the Sunday-school like Stanton Mansfield, or help in the visiting like Fanny. It was very provoking that his sister's intimacy with Miss Ainslie had not, so far, brought him any advantage, for Blanche scarcely ever came to the house, and when she did, he was sure to be away from home.

Fanny had been very busy carrying out her plan of retrenchment. She had made up her mind, when they came to D——, to dispense with the second servant. She thought, that, with the assistance of the boy who took out the medicine, and with extra help on occasion of the dinner-parties, of which Mr. Lyndon

was so fond, and which his daughter had no hope of inducing him to give up, they should be able to manage. This plan had been impracticable at L——, where there had been such a constant succession of company, the temptation to which Fanny was now determined to withstand. It took a great deal of management to induce Jane to agree to this arrangement. She thought it hard, now that the number of the household was increased by the return of Mr. Philip from India, and of Master Tom from school, that she should be expected to do with less assistance. However, the interest of the family, which she had very sincerely at heart, and the remembrance of the ineffectual attempts which, at L——, she had seen her young mistress make to stem the tide of ruin, that at one time seemed inevitable, induced her to relent.

Fanny found her own leisure very much circumscribed by this arrangement, for a considerable portion of the lighter work fell to her share. On unfolding her plans to Philip soon after her first hints on the subject, she was delighted to find that he expressed himself willing to take his share of the necessary inconveniences. He even praised her for the efforts which she was making to secure so desirable an

end. In practice, however, his conduct was not quite equal to his theory ; for when anything happened to put him out of temper, which was very often, he showed an irritability and an impatience at trifling disasters and delays it was sometimes impossible to avoid, which his sister found difficult to bear with equanimity. As for Mr. Lyndon, he never considered any one but himself ; everybody else must give way to him, and consult his wishes exclusively. In these circumstances it was not easy for Fanny to arrange her domestic affairs in such a manner as to prevent the discordant elements in the household from frequent and violent clashing. That they would work harmoniously together, she had not the slightest expectation. An atmosphere of almost constant strife and contention was what Fanny had been used to whenever the members of the family were all at home. Philip's passionate resistance to his father's will, and the perennial state of being in a scrape in which Tom existed, afforded sufficient material for the development of any amount of discomfort and disturbance. Since Philip's arrival at man's estate his father had ceased to attempt to control him on many points on which formerly there had been endless struggles,

finding that his son's will was the stronger of the two. Still it not unfrequently happened that stormy quarrels arose between them, especially when Mr. Lyndon, from too great indulgence in the pleasures of the table, was unusually imperious and dictatorial.

On such occasions Fanny would retire to her own room, knowing, from bitter experience, that any interference on her part would be worse than useless ; and Tom, who, if he happened to be at home, offered a convenient safety-valve, by means of which either party might indulge his temper without provoking retaliation, sought safety in flight, often staying at Mrs. Mansfield's until he thought that the storm was over. At such times he would be rather silent and subdued in manner ; but he gave no explanations, though Stanton guessed, from words dropped now and then, that his home was not a happy one. It was thus that Tom's intimacy with the Mansfields became considerably developed, and he often accompanied Harry in his walks and rides. Stanton became much interested in him, and one evening, on his coming in at the hour of Harry's studies, Stanton had asked him to stay, which he gladly did ; and from that time it became an established thing, that when Tom was not otherwise engaged, he

should join Harry in his studies. Harry was delighted, and Stanton, though at first he had some misgivings on the subject, soon discovered that Tom, by his quickness of perception, and by his more active intellect, stimulated Harry's somewhat languid efforts, and incited him to take more interest in his work.

George Mansfield was, about this period, fortunately out of town for a considerable time at intervals, partly on business and partly on pleasure; so that, Philip's mind not being agitated by the associations connected with his presence, he became better tempered, and some of the causes of disturbance between himself and his father were consequently avoided. Tom always shunned his father's presence whenever it was possible, and seldom came into collision with him except on occasion of some piece of mischief coming under his father's notice, or of the latter being more than usually irritable. Except in the surgery, where he was quiet enough, Tom's natural gaiety burst forth; he was full of fun and frolic, inciting Harry to all kinds of pranks, and being generally, as Reginald expressed it, 'more plague than profit.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE LYNDONS AT HOME.

‘Here storm and sunshine follow one another
With rapid interchanges.’

COLERIDGE.

‘WHERE is Tom?’ asked Fanny, as she and Philip sat down to breakfast one morning.

‘I have sent him to Scott’s with a message that he forgot last night.

‘You might have let him have breakfast first.’

‘No. It will make him remember another time.’

‘Is he getting steadier, do you think?’

‘I don’t know, I am sure; he is working well, at any rate.’

‘That is a good thing. I think you have been gentler with him, Philip.’

Philip went on with his breakfast in silence;

as Fanny glanced at him, she thought how pleasant he looked when he was in a good temper, and what a pity it was that he should ever be out of humour. She was just making a fancy picture in her imagination of how delightful their home would be if they were all as good-tempered as the Mansfields were, when Philip interrupted her :

‘Are you getting to feel settled here now, Fanny?’ he asked.

‘Yes, I think so, but it is rather dull. Yet I was just thinking, Philip, that I should not mind anything if we were happy at home.’

‘Well, I have no objection to be happy at home, I am sure,’ he replied. ‘But I don’t think you ought to be dull, Fanny; you are almost always at the Scotts’.

‘Not always, I am sure; but they have been more friendly than any one else. It was very kind of Mrs. Scott to ask me to stay there until the house was straight.’

‘They are kind, but Fred Scott is not a good companion for Tom, and I think Miss Scott is rather silly.’

‘But she is exceedingly good-natured. She would be very glad to flirt with you; but you used not to think that a mark of silliness, Philip.’

‘You don’t, Fanny.’

‘No, I don’t know that I do,’ she replied frankly.

‘I think that you and Teddy Scott would both be wiser than you are if you did not flirt so much.’

‘Well, he is rather silly, I must confess; but he’ll do to flirt with.’

‘Oh! Fanny, Fanny!’

‘You would be glad enough, Mr. Phil, if Miss Ainslie would flirt with you, so *you* need not talk. There! don’t cut yourself,’ she added, as he cut some bread with rather a dash.

‘Miss Ainslie is a much better companion for you than Miss Scott is, Fanny.’

‘Because she does not flirt?’ asked Fanny, raising her eyebrows. ‘But I see what you are thinking of; you want me to be very intimate with Miss Blanche Ainslie, because——’

Tom at that moment entering, Fanny did not finish her sentence.

‘What about Miss Blanche?’ asked Tom, sitting down out of breath with his run. ‘I *do* like her!’ and he commenced a vigorous attack upon the bread that his brother had cut for him, while Fanny poured out his coffee, which, by this time, was rather cold. Tom, however, was not very particular.

'She is so kind to me, you can't think,' he resumed.

'Kinder than she is likely to be to me, I am afraid,' thought Philip.

'When I went the other day with Harry,' continued Tom, 'when he took a message for Mrs. Mansfield, and I waited outside, she made me come in, and gave me some apples.'

'She knew the way to your heart, it seems,' said Philip.

'No, it was not that,' replied Tom, indignantly; 'but she was so kind—you know what I mean.'

'I am sure I don't know whether I do,' replied Philip, while Fanny laughed.

'I like all the Mansfields,' continued Tom, 'unless it is George; I don't care for him.'

'He is very agreeable, I think,' said Fanny.

'He'll do to flirt with, I suppose,' observed Philip in a low voice, as he rose.

'Yes, he'll do for that.'

'He does not like you, Phil,' said Tom.

'Did he tell you so?'

'No; but he said you weren't to be sent for, and Harry said he said so.'

'You have seen him before, then?' asked Fanny.

'Yes, I have,' replied Philip, as he left the room.

‘Stanton is a jolly fellow, Fan,’ resumed Tom; ‘he is worth a dozen Teddy Scotts.’

‘Well, I didn’t say that he wasn’t.’

‘No, but you said that he was stupid, the other day, and you did not seem to like him.’

‘I neither like him nor dislike him,’ replied Fanny; ‘but don’t go and tell Harry that,’ she added, as she proceeded to arrange the flowers, leaving Tom to finish his breakfast alone. That individual, having taken the edge off his appetite, felt an irresistible temptation, now that he was relieved from the restraint of his brother’s presence, to season the remainder of his meal with a little mischief; and he looked round for a convenient opportunity, which presented itself in the shape of his pea-shooter, which lay on the floor near the window. He pounced upon it while Fanny was gone for some flowers, and as soon as she was again intent upon her work, he commenced operations, and was rewarded by a startled exclamation from his sister as a pea struck her on the ear.

‘Tom! what are you about? you nearly made me break that vase. How many times have I told you not to bring that thing into the house?’

The second pea missed, but the third struck Fanny on the chin, as she turned her head.

‘Now, Tom, you have had breakfast enough if you are beginning that game, and you had better take yourself off;’ and Fanny faced round towards the enemy.

‘All right,’ replied Tom, rising from the table with his mouth full.

‘Take that thing with you, Tom.’

He stuck it in his jacket-pocket, and Fanny went on with her flowers. Tom had to pass behind her, however, and he was just trying to stick an envelope, which she had left on the table, in her hair, when she turned suddenly, suspecting mischief. Tom, in dodging out of the way, caught his foot at a little table, on which stood a valuable microscope of his father’s. Down it went with a crash.

‘There! Tom,’ cried Fanny.

‘Oh, I *am* so sorry,’ he said.

At that moment the door opened, and Mr. Lyndon entered. He saw what had happened in an instant. Tom dashed out of the room, followed by his father; Fanny cried out that it was partly her fault, but he would not listen, and went on calling to Philip, who happened to be in the hall searching for his gloves, to stop the runaway. Tom knew that Philip would not give him up to his father, but he always avoided if possible being the cause of a

collision between the two. He accordingly darted upstairs, intending to rush into his brother's room and drop from the window into the garden, a feat which he had performed many times for sport. As ill-luck would have it, however, Jane appeared at that moment on the landing. It had happened only once or twice, in very extreme cases, that Jane had dared to disobey her master, and whether she would think that the present was one which would come within that category, Tom had no time to consider, and instinct prompted him not to venture upon the trial. Putting his hands on the rail of the balusters he sprang over, letting himself down monkey-fashion, dropping just behind Philip, before he had had time to realise the state of affairs. The next instant Tom had dashed through the kitchen and was gone. Jane came down to take in Mr. Lyndon's coffee, and Fanny, trembling with fear and excitement, ran upstairs, having no wish to face her father, Philip following her to know what was the matter.

All Tom's energies during the next few days were employed in keeping out of his father's way; the other members of the household being in a state of continual uneasiness and apprehension. Mr. Lyndon did not trouble him-

self to search for the truant, and if he happened not to come across him during that time, the culprit generally escaped — especially if his father's attention were distracted by an excursion with a friend, or by some more than usually interesting piece of dissipation.

Tom, in the meantime, was petted by Fanny, and by Jane, who took care to save some particularly choice bits for his dinner. He was also treated with unusual tenderness by his brother, who allowed him to sleep in his room until the danger had passed. This was not an unpleasant change for a short time, especially as Tom seldom fretted much about its probable termination. When it passed off well, the household returned to its usual state; and when it did not, either Master Tom got a severe castigation, which subdued his spirits for a few days, though it roused his temper, or his chastisement was interrupted by Philip, and a quarrel would ensue, of which Tom got the benefit, second-hand, in the shape of sundry cuffings and ratings administered to him by his brother.

It was a few days after Tom's disaster that Blanche tripped up the Walks from Victoria Terrace. The sun was shining brightly, and the shadows lay cool upon the dewy grass. Everything seemed so quiet and peaceful that

Blanche felt as if there ought to be no such thing as strife and discord in the world. It was some time since she had called on Fanny Lyndon. Meeting as they did at the Sunday-school, there did not seem to be the necessity for the interchange of frequent visits, which there otherwise would have been. Blanche, however, now felt not only that a visit from her was due, but that it would have been paid long since but for certain considerations. She also felt that it would be unkind, to one who had shown an earnest wish for her society, to allow her own inclinations to come too much between herself and Fanny; and as she now wished to see the latter, to make some arrangements about the school-party, it would be a good opportunity.

As Blanche passed through the garden, on her arrival at Mr. Lyndon's, she saw Fanny at the window. Her friend hastened to meet her, greeting her warmly; when Blanche perceived that she did not look so bright as usual, and that there were traces of tears in her eyes.

'I hope that nothing is the matter,' said Blanche, in some alarm.

'Oh, nothing very particular, only I have been a good deal worried this morning. My father was going to chastise Tom, and Philip,

hearing him cry out, went to the rescue, which always makes my father very angry, and so they had a quarrel.'

'Had Tom been naughty, then?' asked Blanche.

'He got into disgrace for a careless trick some days ago, and had been keeping out of my father's way since. He does not care much if he escapes punishment. He cries out loudly when my father has got him, for Philip to come; but when he is in Philip's hands he is quiet enough, for he knows, then, that it is of no use.'

'Poor Tom,' said Blanche. 'Don't you think that gentler measures would answer better with him?'

'I have no doubt they would. I try that part of the business, but I get out of patience sometimes, for Tom is very tiresome. Philip is rough with him, but I don't think he wants to hurt him, really, and my father does. He is gone out for the day, fortunately. It is very well that gentlemen do go out sometimes, and let one have a little peace.'

They were both silent for a few minutes. Blanche was wondering how Fanny could exist in so stormy an atmosphere. Her surprise was, not that her friend should be sometimes out of

spirits, but that she should ever be anything else.

‘Well,’ said Fanny, ‘I don’t know that I need worry you with my troubles. There is a duet which I should like you to try with me, if you have time.’

Blanche answered that she had time for that, and Fanny opened the piano.

‘Everything is sticky where there is a boy,’ she observed, taking out her handkerchief to rub the keys. ‘How they do turn a house upside down. Don’t you find it so at your aunt’s?’

‘Harry is very much quieter than Tom,’ was the reply.

‘It is a good thing that he is,’ said Fanny. ‘Tom is so very careless, and I don’t think he tries not to be, either. Of course one must expect boys to be full of activity, but there should be some limit. It is quite impossible to keep the house decent, and Philip is almost as bad as Tom, in some things. He never takes any trouble when he is out of humour. Everything is spoilt that can be spoilt, and broken that can be broken; and as to ink, I don’t know where *that* isn’t.’

‘I should get out of patience, I am sure,’ said Blanche. ‘It must be very provoking.’

‘Only this morning,’ continued Fanny, ‘when I came down, Tom’s hair looked like a wild Indian’s, and when I sent him upstairs to brush it, he came sliding down the rail right upon Jane, who was bringing in the coffee.’

‘I hope no serious injury was done,’ said Blanche.

‘Jane’s temper and the coffee-pot were both very much damaged,’ replied Fanny. ‘Tom would not have dared to come in to breakfast after that, if his father had been down, and I am sure Jane would not have given him any.’

‘Perhaps you think that he has reached the age which Carlyle speaks of?’ suggested Blanche; ‘when boys ought to be put under an extinguisher for a given period.’

‘I think he has,’ was the reply; ‘and it would be quite as well if some of them never came out again.’

While Fanny was finding her music and putting it on the rack, Tom’s voice was heard, seemingly at the bottom of the stairs, shouting at its highest pitch, with a short interval between each word, as if he were waiting for an answer :

‘Jane—Jenny—Jeanette—Joan—Shunette—Juanita !’

Apparently he got the desired answer, for he called out in the same tone :

‘ You are to let’s have dinner half-an-hour earlier ;’ and the next moment, just as Fanny had played the first chord of her introduction and a trill or two, he burst into the room with a bound. He toned down a little, however, when he saw Blanche.

‘ I cannot do with you fidgeting about here,’ said Fanny. ‘ Go into the surgery, or somewhere, there’s a good boy.’

‘ I don’t want to go into the surgery, I’m sure, for Phil is as cross as two sticks ; he’s real savage ’cos I broke a bottle of stuff, and he ain’t got no more on’t, he says.’

‘ Tiresome boy ! Go somewhere else, then ; I am sure I wonder what boys were made for.’

‘ I can tell you what they’re made of, if you like—

‘ “ Frogs and snails, and little dogs’ tails,
And that’s what boys are made of ! ” ’

‘ No wonder that you are so queer, then. That must have been written on purpose for you.’

‘ Oh no, it wasn’t ; it was written long before I was born, when I was a what’s-it’s-name, that Phil says we were before we were men : something like a monkey.’

‘Well, you are something like a monkey now. Do go away, Tom.’

Tom was on the point of making a somersets, but remembering who was present, he stopped in time ; but as he did so, the expression of his face and his gestures were so comical that neither of the girls could help laughing. In the middle of their merriment he startled Blanche by springing across the room and taking a flying leap out of the window.

‘One cannot help loving him very much,’ remarked Fanny. ‘He will take a great deal of taming, he is so full of spirit ; but I dare say he will need it all, poor boy.’

Fanny had just turned to the piano again, when the door opened somewhat suddenly, and in walked Mr. Philip. The expression of his face was certainly not very amiable. He did not look round, but marched across the room to a writing-table near the sofa and rummaged in the drawer, saying, as he did so, in sharp, ringing tones :

‘Fanny! where are those—oh, here they are.’

Blanche had been hesitating whether or not she should speak ; but Fanny, with eyes sparkling with mischief, made a sign to her to keep still. Philip, however, as he closed the table-

drawer, looked up and saw Blanche. The sunshine came over his face instantly.

‘I beg your pardon, Miss Ainslie. I did not know you were here,’ he said, as he came across the room. ‘Why did you not tell me, Fanny?’

‘I thought you seemed in such a hurry, that I would not.’

‘Excuse me a moment,’ he said to Blanche when he had shaken hands.

‘With pleasure,’ replied his sister, before Blanche could speak.

Philip returned to the table and wrote a few words.

‘Where’s Tom, I wonder?’ he asked.

‘He’s in the garden.’

‘Tom!’ he called; and that young gentleman came jumping across the borders.

‘Here; take that telegram. It’s for the medicine you spilt.’

Tom scampered off willingly enough, delighted to see his brother look so pleasant.

‘Now for the song, at last,’ said Fanny.

Blanche, however, said that she had not promised to sing before an audience. It was in vain that Philip protested against her resolution, saying that if she liked he would play the accompaniment, which he was sure looked very

difficult, and then he should not be able to attend ; or he would go to the other end of the room, and promise not to listen. Blanche was not to be persuaded.

‘ Well, then,’ said Fanny, ‘ Phil must sing this duet with me ; I have been trying to catch him ever so long—you know I have, Phil ; and now you seem to have nothing else to do you may as well do that.’

This was not what Philip meant. He wished to hear Blanche sing, and he felt vexed with Fanny for making his devotion to Blanche serve her own purposes, and he protested that it would give no pleasure to Miss Ainslie. Fanny said that the duet was a very pretty one, and Blanche, of course, said that she should like to hear it. Philip could not refuse, but he saw, as he glanced his eye over it, that his sister had caught him in a trap. However, there was no help for it, and they began. The music was lively and pretty ; the heroine was a merry maiden who places her devoted lover in various ridiculous positions, and at last casts him off for a more favoured rival. It was impossible to help laughing at the comical miseries of the unfortunate lover, though Philip protested that it was too bad, and that he was quite disgusted.

Blanche soon discovered that it was time for

her to go, and that, after all, she had not mentioned what she came to consult about. She proposed that Fanny should walk home with her, as she thought that would prevent Philip from escorting her, which she had an instinctive feeling that he was about to propose. Fanny agreed very readily, and divining Blanche's wishes on the subject, she asked her to come up stairs with her to see a pattern, leaving Philip to meditate on the manœuvre.

'It is of no use, Philip,' observed Fanny, when he came in to dinner, 'for you to be dangling after Miss Ainslie. You'll not get her up to a flirtation; *she'll* not flirt, whatever you do.'

'I don't expect her to.'

'Oh, you don't! What do you expect, then?' Philip was silent.

'You had better let her alone; she does not want your attention.'

'I can find that out for myself, Fanny.'

'Well, I thought you seemed as if you were not aware of it.'

'Surely one may be civil to a lady without being called to account.'

'Civil! I am sure it would be a great improvement if you were a little more civil sometimes. But it strikes me that Miss

Blanche Ainslie does not appreciate your civility. And, Philip, the next time that you wish to make an impression upon a lady, it will be as well not to come into the room where she is with such a face as you had just now.'

Philip muttered something, rather impatiently, about being worried out of his life; but the dinner-bell at that moment ringing in a very energetic fashion, which suggested the agency of Master Thomas Lyndon, any further conversation on the subject was postponed for the present.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCHOOL-PARTY.

‘The learned lover lost no time nor tyde,
That least advantage mote to him afford.’

SPENSER.

MR. LYNDON’S house, like so many others of the better kind, was on the Walks. It was very near the point where they crossed the top of the street which formed one of the long arms of the cross, in the shape of which the principal streets had been built. The Walks, with their avenues of chestnuts, limes, or elms, as the case might be, made a circle round the town, where in bygone times had been the old town-wall and moat. On either side of the wide centre walk and surrounding the trees, were bands of the greenest turf, and at convenient intervals were placed ornamental iron seats, which formed pleasant

resting-places for the contemplative, or for the invalid.

As Philip came out of the surgery and turned towards the street, he heard the sound of music, and remembering that this was the day of the Sunday-school Treat, he quickened his pace that he might be in time to see one who, of all the others, was sure not to be absent at such a time. He was quite soon enough. The procession, gay with banners, had not reached the top of the street. First came the rector, kindly, but a little pompous, and at his side the Rev. Reginald, with his straight figure and firm face; then came the girls, the tallest first, with their respective teachers—Fanny, Miss Scott, and the others. Philip glanced down the long line in vain for the one he sought till he reached the end, when his eye rested on the well-known figure, with its light gauzy dress in graceful folds, looking, he thought, almost like woven wind; the drooping hat shaded the sweet face with its delicate paleness, and its clear grey eyes with their spirit light. She was holding by the hand a tiny one whose little feet had lagged behind, cheering it on with soft voice and gentle looks. She did not see him, but passed on after the others, and he walked quickly away with a

sigh, and his eyes bent upon the ground. He did not notice the frank, good-humoured face of Stanton Mansfield, who was at the head of the boys' part of the procession; nor had he the benefit of the kindly nod which that gentleman had ready for him; neither did he see the merry faces of Tom and Harry who were close behind.

It was some hours later in the day when Philip passed down the Walks on the other side of the town from the one on which his own house and that of the Mansfields were situated. He scarcely ever visited that part of the Walks, for there were no houses there except a few labourers' cottages, which, however, might serve as an excuse on occasion. The land on this side of the town was lower than it was on the other, and consisted of what were called the Water Meadows, on the other side of which were some ferny lanes. In these meadows the greater part of the water of the river had been diverted from its bed into smaller channels, which were gay with the water-speedwell, the comfrey's white and purple bells, and the delicate sprays of the water-plantain, while in the copsy hedge-bank grew the handsome purple umbels and spreading foliage of the angelica.

Philip passed on until, in a meadow adjoining the path, he beheld the whole tribe of children and teachers, all in the active pursuit of some game or other. He soon discovered Miss Ainslie playing at 'Duck under water'; his eye followed her as she ducked under the succession of handkerchiefs held outstretched by many little hands. He was startled from his contemplation of the pretty picture by the whizz of an approaching cricket-ball, which he caught just in time to prevent it from crossing the stream into the grounds belonging to a gentleman's house, which were on the other side. The avenue had here, for a short distance, dwindled down to a single row of trees, the path being outside of the stream which ran beneath them. The adventure of the ball caused a loud shout from the boys. Philip threw it back to Stanton who had hastened forward to learn the termination of its flight, and to prevent the boys from rushing after it within forbidden precincts.

'Hallo!' cried that gentleman, on recognising who had thrown back the ball; 'where did you spring from? come and have a game.'

Philip was following Stanton a little reluctantly, when he came upon Tom.

'You here, you rascal?' he said.

'Yes, I am here,' replied Tom, blithely, encou-

raged by the kindness of his brother's tone ; but I did not know that you were coming.'

'Nor I either,' thought Philip.

'May I stay till the end?'

'Yes, if you like.' And Tom ran off

They were soon engaged in a lively game, Philip and Stanton being on opposite sides as experienced players. The ball made some wonderful excursions, but it did not again attempt to cross the stream. Meanwhile, the 'ducks' who, in their interest in their game, had not noticed where they were going, approached dangerously near to the cricketers. Philip, in making a sudden movement to catch the ball, came into violent collision with the troop, which went down before him like a set of ninepins. Of course there was a tremendous outcry. Philip assisted Miss Ainslie out of the middle of the ruck, where she was almost buried. She blushed on seeing who was the assailant, and she was soon able to assure him that no harm was done, notwithstanding that a little wailing had arisen among the party over various bumps and bruises, which had to be examined and compared. However, a suggestion of Tom's, who came up to see what was the matter, that all the wounded should have a piece of plaster from the surgery, put all the little ones into a good humour, and

they set to play again in earnest. No more disasters occurred, except that Tom and another boy, in scrambling for a ball which both of them wanted, rolled into the stream, after which they had to run home and change their clothes, which they did with marvellous rapidity. As Tom said, it was a good thing to have two doctors on the field in case of accidents; though Blanche thought that, as the 'two doctors' had been the cause of both of the disasters, his remark was not a particularly happy one.

Soon after this the party proceeded to that portion of the field where tea was being prepared. Philip had followed Miss Ainslie to take his leave, when Stanton said :

'Come, Lyndon, as you are here, you may as well make yourself generally useful. Here is a teapot for somebody.'

It did not take much cogitating to decide who 'somebody' should be. Philip stationed himself by the side of Miss Ainslie, who could not help thinking that she should have been much more comfortable if she had had one of the awkward lads of her own class at her elbow. However, as Mr. Philip was there, it could not be helped. There was no chance of conversation, for Blanche's time and attention were pretty well occupied with the score of hungry

and thirsty boys before her, and Philip had constantly to make expeditions in search of tea, cake, or bread and butter. It was pleasant to hear the kindly words that Blanche spoke to her somewhat uncouth company, and to note the good understanding which there evidently was between them and herself. Many thoughts passed through Philip's mind during the occasional intervals in which he stood near Blanche.

‘Now, then, we teachers are to have our turn,’ said Stanton, who had been waiting on Miss Lyndon at a table not far off.

‘I must go,’ replied Philip. ‘Besides, I am not a teacher.’

‘You are a waiter, and that’s all the same. Come along.’

Philip hesitated, and glanced at Blanche. She thought that he might have taken Stanton’s invitation.

‘You had better have a cup of tea, Mr. Lyndon,’ she said.

He went at once with her and Stanton. He would not sit down, however, but preferred standing by Miss Ainslie with his cup in his hand. He did not stay long, but, taking a hasty leave, he walked quickly away, springing over the water which divided the

meadow from the path. As Blanche glanced after him, she sighed, and wished he were a different kind of man.

‘It strikes me very forcibly,’ observed Stanton to his mother, as he was telling her about the party later in the evening, ‘that Philip Lyndon is looking after Blanche.’

‘Do you think so?’ asked his mother.

‘Yes, I do,’ he replied, ‘from two or three things which I noticed to-day.’ And he went on to give an account of their proceedings.

‘I don’t think that he is a likely man to attract Blanche,’ said Mrs. Mansfield.

‘Well, I hope not; but there is something rather taking about him, and one can never account for ladies’ tastes. I don’t think that she cares much for George; and I fancy that he thinks so too, and is biding his time.’

‘He has made a mistake there,’ replied his mother.

‘Very likely; I don’t know whether he expects Blanche to drop into his mouth, like a ripe plum, whenever he chooses to open it. If I were her lover I should behave very differently. He is as much too cold as I expect Lyndon will be too hot, in his wooing.’

‘It is a great pity that mistake was made,’ observed Mrs. Mansfield. ‘A young surgeon is

never desirable ; he is sure to be either falling in love or flirting.'

'All surgeons have inconvenienced some one by being young some time, I suppose,' replied Stanton, smiling ; 'and as to his falling in love, I don't know that that would matter if he were the right kind of man. If it is the mere passing desire for a flirtation, it will not affect Blanche at all, but she does not generally attract that sort of attention.'

'It will be of no consequence, anyway, if she does not like him,' remarked Mrs. Mansfield.

'I met with a gentleman the other day, who came from their neighbourhood,' continued Stanton, 'and he said that young Lyndon was an arrant flirt.'

'A creditable reputation,' observed Mrs. Mansfield.

'So I thought,' replied Stanton. 'This gentleman gave a very bad character of Mr. Lyndon ; indeed, from what I have heard of him, he spends most of his time in dissipation.'

'If that is the case it gives his sons a poor chance of turning out good for anything,' said Mrs. Mansfield.

Stanton took an opportunity on the Sunday evening, as they were coming home from church, of telling Blanche what he had heard about

Mr. Philip. He could not judge from her manner whether she was at all annoyed at his communication, or whether it was a matter of indifference to her.

Blanche, indeed, pondered long over her cousin's words, and she decided that the next time she had a chance, she would show Mr. Lyndon decidedly that his attentions were disagreeable to her.

CHAPTER IX.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

‘ But he who stems a stream with sand,
And fetters flame with flaxen band,
Has yet a harder task to prove—
By firm resolve to conquer love !’

SCOTT.

THE sun was shining brilliantly through the still air, as Blanche tripped along the road towards home. A few of the early autumn tints were beginning to paint the trees, and the path was strewn with brown leaves, which crisped beneath the foot with a pleasant sound. The curate and his sister had been making a round of visits, when, as they were returning, they heard of a sick person in a village at some distance, who had expressed a wish to see Mr. Ainslie, and he had started off at once, leaving his sister to return alone. Blanche had enjoyed

her walk very much. The fresh air and exercise had exhilarated her, and had brought an unwonted colour to her cheek, and she was tired enough to feel how pleasant the rest of home would be. She had not proceeded far, when she heard behind her the quick sound of a horse's hoofs, which slackened as it came nearer. In another minute Philip had leaped from his horse and was beside her. How she wished at that moment that she had gone with Reginald!

'Miss Ainslie,' he said, 'will you grant me a few minutes?'

She glanced at him. The intentness of his look deepened the colour on her cheek.

'I must speak to you,' he continued. 'I cannot bear this uncertainty. You must forgive me if I am too precipitate.'

He tried to take her hand, but she withdrew it instantly.

'Mr. Lyndon,' she said, 'I cannot listen to this.'

'Nay! Do not say so!' he cried. 'Only hear what I have to say.'

'It is useless, Mr. Lyndon. Nothing you can say will make any difference.'

'Miss Ainslie, I think if you knew what were my feelings, and if you knew——'

‘Mr. Lyndon, I must interrupt you. Our tastes and habits are so different, that it is impossible that——’

‘It is not impossible!’ he exclaimed. ‘Only give me hope, and I will try to be what you wish.’

He spoke with a pleading earnestness which was very touching, but Blanche felt how utterly hopeless it would be, even to make him understand what she would wish him to be, before she could think of accepting him; and such a transformation, she thought, would be little short of a miracle.

‘I should be deceiving you if I were to allow you to hope for a moment,’ she replied firmly. ‘You must put away any such idea for ever, Mr. Lyndon.’

‘For ever,’ he repeated bitterly.

His face grew dark as he spoke, and his eyes shone with a light like that of a stormy sunset.

They walked on in silence for a minute. Blanche felt half afraid of him, and half sorry for him. She was very reluctant to give pain to any one, but what could she do with the passionate man at her side, but repel him?

‘I know,’ he said, at length, ‘that I am unworthy even to touch your hand, but I long

for your sympathy and love. I would worship the purity to which I cannot attain.'

The passion had faded from his face, and a nobler expression of earnest striving had succeeded it. His tone was humble and subdued.

'I am very sorry to pain you,' she said gently.

'You do not dislike me?' he asked.

'I do not dislike you, Mr. Lyndon, but I do not like your faults.'

'My faults,' he repeated bitterly.

The word in its very limitation seemed to mock him. What would she think if she knew all?

'Blanche,' he said tenderly, addressing her by the name which he had first heard her called, and by which he generally thought of her, 'I know that my heart is dark and stained with sin, but it is full of deep love for you, and if you will you can take it and mould it into something better.'

He spoke so earnestly that it was impossible to believe that he did not mean what he said, and also that he felt it deeply; but Blanche had little doubt that this was but a transient mood which would soon pass away.

'If you could love me, Blanche,' he said, in tones which quivered with emotion, 'I would

cast the past behind me, with its sins and sorrows, and try to rise into a nobler life.'

'Mr. Lyndon, I am sorry, but it cannot be,' she answered.

'You will not give me your love,' he cried, almost fiercely, 'but you cannot prevent me from loving you.'

To Blanche's intense relief, the sound of carriage-wheels was heard coming along the road. Philip took her hand suddenly and kissed it with passionate earnestness. Then springing on his horse, he rode recklessly away.

'I *must* win her! I will *make* her love me!' he muttered as he dashed into the town. After nearly riding over two or three children, he slackened his pace, and went quietly up the street.

Blanche's mind was considerably disturbed by this interview, and she found it very difficult to settle down to her usual occupations. The image of Philip's changing face was constantly before her, with its passion and its tenderness. The glimpse which she had had of the higher capabilities of his nature haunted her. Was it possible, as he had said, to mould him into something better? Then she reflected that even could she overcome her fear of him and get to

love him, in all probability it would lead to a wrecking of herself without saving him.

For several days she did not catch even a glimpse of him, and then she began to meet him occasionally. As he raised his hat he would glance at her askance with a kind of dark resentment in his eyes, which caused her brother to remark that Mr. Lyndon looked anything but amiable. If Blanche did not see much of her stormy lover, she heard of him, however; for one day when she was at her aunt's, Tom came in looking a little out of temper, and on Harry asking what was the matter, he answered that Phil was 'as cross as two sticks.'

'He has been a great deal better lately,' he continued, 'till this week, and now I don't know what to do with him. Sometimes, when I am quite sure that I shall catch it, I don't; and when I think I shan't, I do. The best way, when I see any sign of a storm, is to bolt, and then Phil says I should not run away if I had not a guilty conscience. It's all very fine talking of a guilty conscience,' added Tom, in an aggrieved tone, 'when one gets a box on the ear before one knows what it is about.'

'What a shame!' cried Harry, indignantly.

'And when you "bolt," as you call it,'

asked Stanton, 'how is it when you come back?'

'Oh, sometimes Phil has forgotten all about it,' replied Tom, 'and sometimes I get a double dose.'

'There's not much chance of the boy being trained in any consistent well-doing under such treatment,' thought Stanton, who had been very indignant at Blanche's account of Mr. Lyndon's treatment of Tom, which she had heard from Fanny.

'The equinoctial gales have come on at Lyndon's, it seems,' observed Stanton to Blanche, when the boys were gone out. 'A pretty husband Mr. Phil will make for somebody. I am very sorry for that boy.'

'So am I,' replied Blanche; 'and for that man, too,' she thought, 'for indulging such a temper.'

The next news which Blanche heard of Philip was from the cricket-field, where he sometimes spent an hour when he had leisure. A dispute had arisen between him and George about some trifle connected with the game. George had shown more temper than was at all usual with him, but Lyndon had become so angry that the others were obliged to interfere.

All these things combined to make Blanche

feel that she was right in not showing any sign of relenting towards him. She determined to make up by her kindness to Tom, for any trouble that she might be the indirect means of causing him. Harry often came to the curate's lodgings, but Tom had been very shy of going there, until Blanche by her kindness had won his confidence completely, and he then became a frequent visitor.

It was a source of great bitterness to Philip that while his brother and sister had been admitted to that paradise, he must remain outside the gate. As he passed up and down the Walks he cast many a longing look at No. 3, Victoria Terrace, with its myrtle and veronica on either side of the door, and the white passion-flower and purple clematis which clustered over its trellis-work. The terrace stood sideways to the Walks, facing a green field, and what with the slanting view and the shrubs in front, Philip could never catch even a glimpse of Blanche inside the house. He thought that could he be in daily intercourse with her, he should be able to dispel some of the prejudices against himself which she evidently now entertained, and he waited impatiently for some chance which should throw this in his power.

Harry Mansfield kept unusually well this

autumn. Stanton said that he was trying to see how long he could keep out of Mr. Philip's hands. Mrs. Mansfield, however, was not so fortunate, and she became unwell again. Her indisposition, in her feeble state, necessitated medical attendance ; but it was not of so serious a nature as to need Blanche's presence in the house. Of course she was often there, and thus Philip had an occasional chance of seeing her, though he felt pretty sure that she avoided him as much as possible. It struck him also, that since the scene in the cricket-field Stanton had rather shunned his company, which before he had seemed inclined to cultivate. Bitterly as Philip at times mourned over his own failings, when the occasion of provocation came, he had not always sufficient power of self-restraint to conquer them ; and in his seasons of disappointment and vexation, he sometimes gave way to a recklessness which threatened to lead him still further from the path that he knew he ought to follow.

Blanche had observed that since their interview he had exercised considerably more caution in meeting her. She hoped that he was gradually coming to the conclusion that his pursuit of her was hopeless, and if so, she thought she might congratulate herself upon

having escaped pretty easily. Philip indeed was only 'biding his time,' as Stanton had said of George. He was anxious, too, not to excite the suspicions of the Rev. Reginald, for he knew that he could hope for no quarter in that direction.

CHAPTER X.

THE RIDE.

‘“By my faith,” then said he,
“No merry maiden shall trifle with me.”’

Old Ballad.

‘AUNT,’ said Blanche, one morning as they were returning from a drive, ‘I have been thinking that it would be very nice to ask Miss Lyndon to ride with me sometimes.’

‘I have no objection,’ replied Mrs. Mansfield.

‘When we were walking together the other day,’ continued Blanche, ‘and Fanny was telling me about their life at L——, she mentioned incidentally that she used often to ride with her father, or her brothers when they were at home. I said that I had not heard of her riding here, and she told me that her pony had been sold when they came, and that her

brother's horses were neither of them fit for her to manage.'

'I have fancied,' observed Mrs. Mansfield, 'that their affairs were going wrong before they came. If that was the case, they were, of course, quite right to retrench.'

'Well, I hope they will recover themselves, if it is only on account of Miss Lyndon and Tom,' said Blanche.

'I am afraid, that this will, perhaps, give Mr. Philip some further chance of making himself agreeable,' said her aunt.

'I have thought of that, aunt,' was the reply. 'However, Mr. Philip does not make himself so agreeable that I shall not be able to keep him at a distance, and I am not at all inclined to give up his sister on his account.'

'Well, my dear, I believe you are right,' said Mrs. Mansfield, delighted to hear her niece express herself so indifferent to the attentions of her handsome admirer. 'I have been very sorry for Miss Lyndon,' she added, 'since you told me about her troubles. She must have a good deal to try her, poor thing.'

'I am very sorry for her indeed,' said Blanche; 'I don't know, I am sure, what I should do in her place.'

'She has plenty of spirit, or it would be in-

tolerable,' observed Mrs. Mansfield. 'I shall be very glad to show her any little kindness that is in our power.'

'There she is, just come out of Mrs. Scott's. If you do not mind taking the reins, aunt, I will ask her about it?'

Blanche jumped out of the phaeton as she spoke, and she and Fanny walked down the street together. Fanny was delighted with the proposal. She warmly expressed her thanks to Blanche for her kindness in thinking of it.

'I am very fond of riding,' she added; 'and one is glad of almost anything for a change. We have been used to so much society, and now that we have scarcely any, it is rather dull. My father is almost always out, and he is not very companionable; and Philip is dreadfully cross just now—I don't know what is the matter with him, I am sure. I don't see much of him, that is one comfort; but he makes Tom more fractious and tiresome than he would be otherwise. I am almost tempted, sometimes, to run away and leave them to it; and either to go for a governess, or to marry the first man who asks me—only one is afraid of jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire.'

'I would not do that, Fanny,' said Blanche; 'I mean, not marry in that way.'

‘ Well, I don’t mean to ; only one must get married sometime, and gentlemen are all alike.’

‘ Oh, I don’t think so !’ cried Blanche.

‘ Don’t you ? Well, some are pleasanter than others. My cousin Kate is a governess, and she is very happy, I believe—I wonder whether I should be. However, I do not want to leave Tom at present.’

They parted when they came to the corner of the street ; Fanny saying that any time would suit her that Blanche liked to fix. All that now remained was to obtain a cavalier, who would have to be either George or Stanton, as the other horse was not to be trusted under Harry’s management. When Stanton came to Victoria Terrace that evening, Blanche told him of her plan. She was rather disappointed at the expression which came over his face.

‘ I dare say Miss Lyndon will like it,’ he said.

‘ I thought that we might go to-morrow, Stanton, if you can go with us.’

‘ Oh, I am to go, am I ?’

‘ Not if you object, of course.’

‘ I do object, decidedly.’

‘ What do you mean, Stanton ?’

‘ I have no inclination to figure as one of

Miss Lyndon's admirers, and the rival of Edward Scott, Esq., otherwise Teddy.'

'Nonsense, Stanton.'

'I don't mean to go, Blanche.'

'George will go, I am sure,' replied Blanche, who was more annoyed than was often the case with her cousin.

'George is considered as an engaged man, and it does not matter to him.'

'I don't consider him so, at any rate,' replied Blanche; 'and I think that you are a little over-fastidious in this, Stanton.'

'I don't think it is worth while, Blanche, to go against one's feelings for the sake of cultivating an acquaintance which is not likely to bring any satisfaction.'

'I am very sorry for Miss Lyndon, Stanton, and I like her, too.'

'Oh, I am sorry enough for her, as to that, and I have no objection to sympathise with her on all suitable occasions.'

'Then you decline going to-morrow?'

'Yes, I do, decidedly.'

As Blanche glanced at his face, she perceived from the quiet firmness of its expression that it would be useless to say more. She knew by experience, that, gentle and yielding as Stanton usually was, when he had once made up his

mind, either to do or not to do anything, it was impossible to move him.

‘I’ll ask George to go, if you like,’ he said, after a pause.

‘Thank you. I shall be glad, and let Harry run down in the morning and tell me whether he can go.’

Later in the evening, Stanton conveyed to his brother Blanche’s request, as he called it, to which that gentleman willingly acceded.

‘But how was it that you did not offer to go?’ he asked.

‘Well, for one thing, I am going out of town.’

‘And for another, you were afraid of being drawn into a flirtation, I suppose?’

‘No, I was not afraid of that. But I am not a lady’s man, you know, George.’

‘Well, you do right to be cautious, Stanton; for it strikes me that Miss Lyndon is rather a fascinating young lady.’

‘You are more likely than I am, to be drawn into a flirtation, George,’ replied Stanton, a little sharply.

‘What’s the matter, now?’ asked George, in some surprise, for even the slightest indication of impatience on the part of Stanton was a very unusual occurrence.

‘Nothing at all,’ replied Stanton, with his usual good-humour.

‘If *you* are smitten by Miss Lyndon’s charms, you had better go yourself,’ observed George.

‘I cannot plead guilty to any such indictment,’ said Stanton, quietly. ‘I have no doubt that you will have a very pleasant ride.’

The next morning was a lovely one, with a brilliant sun and a fresh breeze, which brought life and health upon its wings. Fanny seemed to feel its influence; she was full of buoyant gaiety; her eyes sparkled with joy and animation, and her cheek glowed with pleasure and excitement. Her slender, elegant figure looked well in her riding-habit, and she sat ‘Tom’s pony,’ as Harry generally called it, with ease and grace. Fanny’s enjoyment of her ride was by no means diminished by the admiration with which she felt that George regarded her, though that gentleman was especially careful that his cousin should not see any evidence of it. Blanche, on her part, thought Fanny more charming than usual. She laid the exhilaration of her spirits, as was indeed partly the case, to the reaction from the strain of her domestic difficulties.

As they were returning home, Philip overtook them. His first feeling was one of delight on seeing his sister with Miss Ainslie, though that

was not unmingled with annoyance when he perceived who was their escort. He did not join them, but merely slackened his pace as he lifted his hat to Blanche; but the glance which he gave her revealed a much deeper satisfaction than was necessitated by his sympathy with his sister's enjoyment, and caused her to realise that he hoped to derive some advantage himself from the arrangement, which she, however, made a determined resolution that he should not do. She perceived that one good result of George's presence, of which she had not thought, had already been brought into play, and that was that Philip, instead of riding home with them, as he would unquestionably have done if Stanton had been with them, had passed on with merely a courteous greeting.

Fanny had heard the rumour that Blanche was engaged to her cousin George, but she had not given much thought to the subject until it was brought more forcibly before her by George's admiration of herself, which she fancied that he did not wish his cousin to perceive. Fanny, however, was determined that if her new admirer were to enjoy the pleasure of a flirtation with her, he must do it openly and in the presence of all beholders. She had not yet made up her mind as to how far she would

lead him, or permit him to go, as the case might be. At dinner she gave a lively account of her ride, but made no particular remark about George until they were in the drawing-room, where Philip sat down in the easy-chair, looking rather better-tempered than he had done lately.

‘Philip,’ she began, ‘is Blanche Ainslie engaged to her cousin?’

‘Why do you wish to know?’ he asked.

‘Miss Scott said that she was,’ replied Fanny, without answering his question.

‘I don’t believe she is,’ said Philip: ‘and even if she were she ought not to marry him, to say nothing of their being cousins.’

‘Why not?’

‘He is a villain!’

‘Indeed! You know that, do you?’

‘Yes, I do.’

‘You are the gentleman she ought to marry, I suppose, Phil?’

Philip was silent.

‘And she is not of that opinion? Perhaps she thinks there is a pair of you?’

‘I don’t know what she thinks of her cousin, I am sure.’

‘What does she think of you?’

‘Fanny!’

‘Well, that is hardly a fair question, I admit. So you don’t think that she is engaged?’

‘What is it to you, Fanny?’ he asked. ‘Have you been flirting with George Mansfield?’

‘He has paid me some attention,’ was the reply.

‘Then perhaps he is not thinking of Blanche,’ thought Philip, with intense satisfaction; ‘unless, indeed, he is playing a double game, which is not unlikely.—Fanny,’ he said, aloud, ‘have nothing to do with George Mansfield; he is treacherous.’

‘You need not be afraid, Philip; he is not my “fate.”’

‘He is mine, more likely,’ said Philip to himself. ‘Don’t flirt with him, Fanny,’ he added aloud.

‘I shall do as I like about that, Mr. Phil. A fine one you are to preach to me, when you get into a temper because somebody won’t flirt with you.’

Philip was silent. The idea of his sister being engaged in a flirtation with the man whose character he detested, whose revenge he dreaded, and whose very presence was hateful to him, filled him with disgust and abhorrence. However, he reflected that it would be useless to say anything more upon the subject to

Fanny ; indeed, it would be likely enough to determine her to follow the very course from which he wished to deter her.

After considerable reflection, Miss Fanny came to the conclusion that she might pursue to any extent which seemed desirable a flirtation with George Mansfield. She felt little doubt that her brother had good reason for his estimate of that gentleman, and also for his impression that Miss Ainslie was not engaged to him. Fanny thought that, in the circumstances, she should be quite justified in flirting with him, and with such a man there need be no scruple as to trifling with his affections. This latter consideration, indeed, was one which seldom had much weight in that young lady's calculations.

Philip Lyndon's Troubles.

CHAPTER XI.

RELENTING.

‘The gloomiest soul is not all gloom ;
The saddest heart is not all sadness ;
And sweetly o’er the darkest doom
There shines some lingering beam of gladness.’
HEMANS.

THE evening was rather a stormy one : thick masses of clouds, from which fell an occasional drop of rain, were flying before the wind. The withered leaves whirled along in eddies, rustling up into little heaps at the sides of the path, or where the roots of the trees offered any obstruction. Philip was going, with a gloomy brow, from the lower end of the town to his own house through the Walks, as he very often did, that he might pass by Victoria Terrace, and perchance see Blanche going to or returning from Mrs. Mansfield’s. He had been reviewing his past life ; its sins had risen up against him,

bringing a crushing sense of remorse and shame, which weighed upon his heart with the paralyzing sensation of despair. As he thought of the fair name and the unburdened conscience which he might have had, and the love which in all probability he should have won, his heart swelled with an almost intolerable anguish. He just reached the terrace as Blanche came out, and turned to pass up the Walks towards her aunt's. Philip hurried forward; he felt that his chance was come. In a minute he was at her side.

‘Good-evening, Miss Ainslie,’ he said; ‘you must forgive me if I ask for a few minutes, but I do not wish to annoy you.’

Blanche had started as if from fear when he addressed her.

‘I do not see that any good can come of your speaking to me,’ she answered coldly; ‘the question is settled, and as far as I am concerned it cannot be altered.’

‘Have you no pity for me?’ he cried passionately; ‘you go on in your cold impassiveness, heedless of the misery you inflict.’

‘Mr. Lyndon, you talk wildly. I have done nothing of which you can complain.’

‘You scorn my love,’ he cried.

‘I do not scorn it, but I cannot return it.’

‘You do not pity me.’

‘I pity you that you have no more self-possession than you show,’ she replied, vexed by his pertinacity; ‘your conduct is not gentlemanly, Mr. Lyndon.’

He looked at her, and she could see, even in the dim light, the conflict of emotions that swept over his countenance. He did not speak, but walked on for a minute in silence.

‘All is over, then,’ he said at length, in a hoarse, hollow voice; ‘you cast me away without a pang. In my remorse and my despair, I longed for a word of pity from you, if not of love, and you cannot give it me.’

‘Mr. Lyndon, I am very sorry,’ said Blanche, deeply moved. ‘I shall be glad if anything that I *can* say will comfort you.’

‘I have been almost beside myself with my misery,’ he resumed, in a calmer tone; ‘there is no one to whom I can turn for a word of comfort, but you.’

‘My brother or my cousin Stanton would be able to advise you much better than I should,’ she replied.

‘Your cousin has shunned me lately,’ he said, ‘and your brother would spurn me as a wretch, did he know all. You alone can give me the sympathy I need; I knew that the

first time I saw you. Do forgive me, Miss Ainslie, for speaking to you thus.'

'Oh, yes,' she replied.

Blanche had not in her preoccupation, and in the increasing darkness, perceived that they had passed Mrs. Mansfield's, and were approaching that part of the Walks where was Mr. Lyndon's house. She turned round somewhat hastily on discovering where she was, and he turned with her.

'I will not ask for your love,' he said, after a minute's silence; 'but if you will speak kindly to me, I will try to win your esteem. Do you think,' he asked suddenly, as they were approaching Mrs. Mansfield's, 'that the remembrance of one great sin ought to blight a man's life for ever?'

'Oh, Mr. Lyndon!' cried Blanche in horror.

'Do not scorn me, Miss Ainslie,' he said imploringly.

'God knows I would not do that,' she replied, as soon as she could command her voice.

'Why, Blanche, is that you?'

It was Stanton's voice; he was just coming out of his mother's house.

Lyndon bowed, and walked on.

'What is the matter, Blanche?' asked Stanton, startled at the expression of her face as

the lamp-light fell upon it. 'Has Mr. Lyndon frightened you?'

'He startled me very much.'

'What has he been doing?' asked her cousin when they got into the house.

'He did nothing particular, but he said something very strange. He seems to be in great trouble, Stanton.'

'It does not need a magician to find out what he is after,' he said.

'Of course I could not promise him that.'

'I should think not, indeed.'

'But I am very sorry for him, Stanton.'

'Oh, Blanche, Blanche! when a woman begins to be sorry for a man whom she is obliged to repel, she is in a bad way.'

'I am not in a bad way, I assure you, Stanton.'

'Well, I hope not; but I don't think you need waste much pity on him, Blanche; he'll get over it. It does not do to be too soft-hearted in such cases.'

'I don't think that I am at all soft-hearted,' replied Blanche.

'I am afraid that you have got a soft place for him somewhere in your heart,' thought Stanton, though he did not venture to say so. 'I must give Reginald a hint to look after you, Blanche,' he said aloud.

‘No, don’t do that, Stanton ; I am perfectly competent to take care of myself.’

‘I’m not so sure of that, Mistress Blanche,’ replied her cousin.

Stanton was very much puzzled. What could Lyndon have said to produce that look on Blanche’s face? He could not understand it. He felt some delicacy about asking her, and he thought the best way would be to mention the circumstance to his mother, as she would have no difficulty on that score. Blanche’s feeling of pity towards Lyndon had evidently been very deeply stirred. Stanton could not help thinking that it was very strange that Lyndon should seek to make a confidante of his cousin, and it made Stanton regard him with more suspicion than he otherwise would have done. But that Blanche should be willing to listen to him, and to give him her sympathy, was incomprehensible. He thought that she was the most unlikely person that he knew to lend herself to such communications.

George accompanied Blanche back to Victoria Terrace, and as he stayed to supper, she had no opportunity for thought till she went to bed. Then, as Philip’s words and looks came back vividly to her mind, she felt for him a deep compassion, which inclined her to judge of him

more leniently than would otherwise have been the case. His tone of despair, when he thought that she was indifferent to his sufferings, and the question which had so startled her, both pointed to a state of mind resulting from the struggle of the awakening conscience with the guilt that oppressed it. Blanche felt that in listening to him at all she had gone the first step on a path along which she dared not look. Taken by surprise, she had not had time to think ; now she should be on her guard, and should be able to frame her conduct by the dictates of her judgment. She would treat him with a mingled kindness and firmness, which she thought would tend to soothe his feelings and to keep him within the bounds which it was necessary to maintain between herself and him. She felt that he had been wrong in urging her as he had done, but the state of his mind must be his excuse, and perhaps, in his calmer moments, he would realise that he had not acted towards her as he ought to have done. While she could not help being surprised at the relation in which she stood towards him, she felt that it was in some respects a compromising one ; and she thought that one way of lessening the difficulty would be to interest her cousin Stanton in Mr. Philip, as, if they could

become firm friends, that would divert his need of sympathy in some degree from herself.

As Philip walked home he felt considerably soothed and comforted. He thought that he had established a kind of tie between himself and Miss Ainslie, which he would be careful to give her no pretext for breaking. At the very moment when all had seemed lost, a ray of hope had beamed upon him. Then came the thought, that, until she knew exactly his circumstances, he should be on very uncertain ground. Miss Ainslie was now in some measure prepared for what was to follow, but her exclamation of horror at his question still rang painfully in his ears. It was even possible that when she should know all, she would cast him off utterly and irretrievably. The thought of such a blasting of his hopes caused the colour to flee from his cheek and the cold dew to come upon his forehead. However, he determined to take the first opportunity to make his confession, and to trust that Blanche's pity for him would prevent her from discarding him in consequence.

CHAPTER XII.

GEORGE'S DISCOVERY.

'Now, for my life the knave doth court my love !'

SHAKESPEARE.

THE day following the one on which had occurred Blanche's interview with Philip was Sunday, and Blanche, in her interest in the school-work and in the services, had almost forgotten the incident of the previous evening ; though she had, through all, a kind of uneasy consciousness that some disturbing element had entered her usually peaceful life. Blanche always sat at church in the Mansfields' pew. George and Stanton were both there that evening, Harry being kept at home by a cold. Blanche had glanced at the Lyndons' pew, which was next to theirs, at the commencement of the service, but it was empty ; and she had

not looked again till the chanting began, when the sound of a rich bass voice made her glance round, and there, by his sister's side, stood Philip.

It was the first time that she had seen him at the service, and it caused her a feeling of great pleasure, for it seemed to give her more hope that he was in earnest in what he had said. She had looked away instantly, so that their eyes did not exactly meet, but he saw the flush which passed over her cheek for a moment.

The sermon was a short one, and Blanche listened to it with a kind of intuition of what would touch Philip too deeply ; but to her great relief it was rather of a soothing than of a searching nature, and she was glad when it was safely over. She thought that he was scarcely in a fit state of mind to profit by any words which would add fuel to the flame of his remorse.

Blanche had to take George's arm as they came out of church, Stanton following them. There was a kind of block outside the door, and the Lyndons had to wait a minute before passing on. The light of the lamp fell on Philip's face just as he raised his hat to Blanche, and his glance at her was so full of expression.

that George could not but notice it; he saw, too, the colour which it called up on his cousin's cheek. He felt very angry, but he put a strong constraint upon himself.

'Lyndon looked at you,' he said, as they walked on, 'as if——' George stopped and hesitated, and then, instead of finishing his sentence, he added, 'I did not know that he aspired to be an admirer of yours.'

Blanche was silent. She felt annoyed, both at George's manner and at his words.

'Of course you cannot think of allowing that for a moment,' continued George.

'I don't know that you have any right to ask that, George.'

'As a cousin, I have, certainly,' he replied.

'I question it, sir. We are squabbling about the rights of cousins,' she added to Stanton, who then came up.

'Well, it strikes me that they need defining,' observed Stanton. 'They may be taken to mean anything or nothing, and may include everything one chooses to put into them.'

'I don't agree to that at all,' protested Blanche.

'You had better draw up a definition, George, that will comprise the views of all of us,' observed Stanton, laughing.

‘I think that a kind of brother and sister tie is the most natural,’ suggested Blanche.

‘That involves the giving of advice, I am sure,’ declared George.

‘But not exercising control, sir.’

‘Hear, hear!’ said Stanton.

‘I am not so sure of that,’ replied George. ‘If I were to see you acting foolishly, Blanche, I should have a right to control you.’

‘To advise me, sir, if you please.’

‘And then you could follow the advice or not as you liked, I suppose,’ said Stanton. ‘Reginald is gone to the rector’s, Blanche,’ he added, ‘so you had better come with us.’

A friend of George’s came in to supper, and as Reginald did not call for his sister, Stanton saw her home.

‘Now, Blanche,’ he began, as soon as they were in the Walks, ‘I want to have a little talk with you.’

‘We have not settled yet what are the rights of cousins,’ she replied, smiling.

‘Never mind that; I want to warn you about Lyndon. I don’t think that you realise what constitutes such a man as he is.’

‘I think I do,’ she said.

‘I don’t think you do. A violent temper, in the first place.’

‘That is plain enough,’ was the reply.

‘A great reputation for flirting.

Blanche was silent.

‘And most likely a complete mastery of all the various dodges and pretences which the pursuers of that art generally cultivate.’

‘That is a mere supposition,’ observed Blanche.

‘Not quite. I imagine, also, that he possesses a strength of will, and an unscrupulousness in carrying it out, which make him both difficult and dangerous to deal with.’

‘There may be something in that,’ admitted Blanche, who felt that Philip had given her just ground for thinking that in that respect her cousin’s estimation of him might be correct.

‘There is no doubt that he is a very determined fellow,’ continued Stanton, ‘and you know what George said about him, which may be exaggerated, or it may not. But, however that is, I am quite sure that what we have seen of him indicates habits and ways of thinking which are very different from what you have been used to ; and you had better keep out of his way, Blanche.’

‘I mean to do that, Stanton,’ she replied frankly.

Blanche felt very much inclined to suggest that Stanton should cultivate Lyndon's acquaintance, but she feared, that, should she do so, her cousin would conclude that she was interested in her somewhat questionable admirer.

Stanton felt a little better satisfied after this conversation, though he thought that Blanche showed more anxiety than was necessary to prove that Lyndon was not so bad as he might be.

Blanche had grown up from childhood in very frequent intercourse with her cousins, and since she and her brother had come to D—— at the previous Christmas, there had been almost daily communication between them. Stanton, of whom she had seen the most, she had looked upon almost as a brother. George, whose nature was not so frank, had been rather distant; but since they had been more thrown together she had not been able to decide, how much of his devotion was due to the cousin and how much to the lover. In these circumstances it would have seemed uncalled for to repel attentions, which might have no particular meaning, and which had gradually become customary. It was only when George showed a disposition to exercise authority over her that Blanche rebelled.

George, indeed, was not a very ardent lover. He did not think that his cousin cared very much for him, but while she cared for no other he was content. He knew that by common report she was considered as his future bride, and that had, so far, served to scare away all intruders. He was in no hurry to be married, but whenever he should decide to take that step, Blanche would make for him an incomparable wife. She was all that could be wished in that capacity—elegant, refined, accomplished, good tempered—fit to take her place as the wife of the leading lawyer of the town, to rule his house with judgment, and bring up his children in the way that they should go. Added to these qualifications, she was not of a suspicious nature, and anything that he did not wish to come to her knowledge he should have no difficulty in keeping in the background. Neither had she failings which would compromise him in any way. If her devotion to her brother's plans was a little more zealous than was necessary, that was, at any rate, laudable in a clergyman's sister ; and when she became his wife, a word from him would restrain it within proper bounds.

George was considerably disturbed by the idea that a rival had appeared upon the field—

and such a rival ! Determined and unscrupulous, as Stanton had surmised, George knew Lyndon to be. Possessed of superior physical advantages, and of an energy of will and an impetuosity of temperament which, in such cases, George knew were apt to carry all before them, he began to fear his rival as much as before he had hated him. He knew that to treat Lyndon with open hostility would be to provoke an encounter which would be highly dangerous. What he could do must be done by underhand means, and even they must be resorted to with great caution ; for Lyndon's temper was such, that, were he thoroughly roused and brought to bay, he might openly denounce his enemy's schemes, even though it should involve his own destruction. In these circumstances George felt that he was under the necessity of making love to Blanche in a rather more ardent fashion than he was quite prepared to do ; but he did not want to run the risk of losing her, especially to Philip Lyndon. George felt that on this side of the question also the exercise of caution was imperative, as Blanche would be easily alarmed at what she might look upon as undue pressure brought to bear upon her.

Philip had heard from several quarters of Blanche's future destiny, but in his own mind

he had scouted the idea as quite impossible, and he considered, that the report had arisen from the fact of their being cousins, and from the frequency of intercourse which naturally took place between the families.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN ACCIDENT.

‘ He found her, as ye find some cherished bud
Of early primrose, when the storm is past,
Crushed by the vexing of the tempest flood ;
Prostrate and pale she lay.’

ALFORD.

THE Lyndons had been invited to a dinner-party on the next evening. Philip had decided not to go, as one means of keeping his good resolutions. When the time arrived, however, he perceived that his father had already taken more wine than was advisable, and he thought that by accompanying him he might induce him to return home earlier than usual. Philip found this plan rather difficult of accomplishment, but at last he succeeded. Mr. Lyndon, though in a very unfit state, insisted upon taking the reins ; and Philip, rather than subject himself to an

angry and, in all likelihood, a useless altercation in presence of the servants, gave way, trusting to chance more than to anything else for their reaching home in safety, of which, however, the reckless pace at which Mr. Lyndon persisted in driving gave little promise. The road, fortunately, was tolerably straight, and they reached the avenue without accident. Philip was just warning his father that he thought there was a carriage before them, when, guided by a movement of Mr. Lyndon's unsteady hand, the horse swerved to the side of the road, and the next moment they were upon the other carriage. Philip snatched the reins just in time to prevent a complete smash, by bringing the horse on his hind legs. The other horse, starting sideways in its fright, brought the carriage into violent collision with the bank, throwing two of its occupants, a lady and a gentleman, into the middle of the road. Mr. Lyndon, on finding himself interfered with, struck his son such a blow with the handle of his whip that he could not retain his hold of the reins; but, springing down, he snatched the lady from under the horse's feet. He had not time to rescue the gentleman before the dog-cart went over him. What was Philip's horror, on taking the lady to the bank at the side of the

road, where the moonlight shone between the trees, when he saw the inanimate figure of Miss Ainslie. Her hat had fallen off, and her soft brown hair was stained with blood. In the meantime George Mansfield, who had escaped unhurt, tied the pony to a tree, and assisted Lyndon, who had given up Miss Ainslie to her brother, the fourth occupant of the carriage, to raise Stanton from the ground.

‘A pretty mess you’ve made of it,’ said George.

‘It was not my doing,’ growled Philip, savagely.

Stanton’s arm was broken, but the extent of any other injuries which he might have received, it was impossible to tell in the uncertain light; and a like report was all that could be given of Miss Ainslie, who still remained insensible. Both the patients, however, to Philip’s intense relief, soon showed signs of returning consciousness. It was arranged that Reginald should support his sister on one side of the phaeton, while Lyndon took charge of Stanton on the other, and that George should lead the pony, which was still excited and trembling with the fright.

In about ten minutes they reached the town, and passed on to Mrs. Mansfield’s, Philip

despatching some one for Tom to bring his instruments and other things which he would require. By this time Miss Ainslie had revived considerably, so that Philip could with an easy conscience attend to Stanton, who, besides the breaking of his arm, was severely bruised, and had received internal injuries the exact nature of which it was difficult to ascertain. When Philip had attended to him he proceeded to Blanche's room. He was able to announce that her wound was not dangerous, but that she would feel the effects of it for some time. He bathed her head, and cut away the soft brown hair from the wound, taking an opportunity, when Mrs. Mansfield's back was turned for a moment, to secure some of it for himself. Reginald had next to be examined; he had received a severe bruise from Mr. Lyndon's horse's foot coming down on his shoulder after Philip had reined it up so suddenly. He was very much pleased to hear Philip's report of his sister, and his opinion that she would be well enough to return with him in a few days to their lodgings.

‘And now, Mr. Ainslie,’ said Philip, ‘I must tell you that I have attended to Miss Ainslie and yourself as a matter of course in the circumstances, but that if you would prefer to have

Mr. Wood I will willingly give place to him, and will furnish him with all necessary particulars of the case.'

'I am sure, Mr. Lyndon,' replied Reginald, 'that neither my sister nor myself would wish it for a moment; and I must lose no time in expressing to you my gratitude for your promptness in rescuing her, and I have no doubt she would wish to join me in thanking you heartily.'

Philip was delighted. It had cost him a great effort to make the proposal, and when it was not accepted his relief was immense. By the time that all this was arranged the night was far advanced. Tom, who had been very useful in waiting on his brother, was marched off home, and Harry to bed. Philip insisted also on Mrs. Mansfield going to rest, saying that they should have her ill again if they did not take care. He suggested, that, as it was hardly worth while for him to go to bed, he should remain with Stanton till the morning—a proposal to which Mrs. Mansfield made no objection, though she said she was sure that Mr. Lyndon must be tired by this time.

Philip sat in that quiet room, bathing the patient's head, or easing a bandage where it pressed too tightly. His heart was full of many thoughts. Vexation with his father, and

shame that by his recklessness and self-indulgence he should have been the cause of the accident, occupied it by turns. But after a time gentler feelings took possession of his mind. The consciousness of Blanche's presence in the next room shed over him a sense of quiet happiness, of which a short time since he had little dreamt. What would it be to see her daily, to be admitted into the sacred precincts of her home? Perhaps he might even win her love; and then he sighed to think how unworthy he was of her, and that when she should know all she might shrink from him as a polluted thing.

When the morning came, Philip was able to form a more correct judgment with regard to Stanton. He was obliged to admit that the injuries were severe, that the patient was excessively weak from loss of blood, and that he was suffering considerably from fever.

It was with a heart touched with softened and reverent feeling that Philip again entered Blanche's room, where Mrs. Mansfield was watching, for a short time. Blanche was lying with her eyes closed, and her hair strewn upon the pillow. Her face was whiter than usual, but as she opened her eyes and saw him, a faint tinge, like that on the inside of a shell, came

upon her cheek, making her look, Philip thought, inexpressively lovely. As he met the glance of those pure eyes, he wondered how he had dared to speak to her as he had done—he, the guilt-stained one. He seemed so quiet and subdued, during the few minutes that he stayed, that Blanche could not help wondering at him.

Philip left Mrs. Mansfield's as the morning star was fading before the growing light of day, and passed slowly beneath the arching elms to his own house. When he went in to breakfast, he found Tom and Fanny both very anxious for news of the invalids. Blanche, by her gentle sympathy, had endeared herself to both, and Tom was loud in his praise of Stanton's kindness and good temper—which Philip felt as a condemnation of himself in his treatment of his brother; and he sighed to think how few there would be that would miss him were he lying in Stanton's place. Fanny did not say much about Stanton; but the news of his accident came upon her with a considerable shock, which, for a time, conquered the feeling of pique and resentment that she entertained towards him, though it did not subdue it altogether. When she heard from her brother what had caused the disaster, she

experienced a degree of shame and mortification which it was very difficult to endure, and which made her shrink from the idea of meeting any of the Mansfields, till their feeling of dislike and indignation should have had time to become in some degree softened.

Philip was intensely annoyed when his father came downstairs and laid all the blame of the accident upon him, saying, that if he had let the reins alone it would not have happened, and that he had so frightened the horse that it ran away, and there was no knowing what might have happened, had it not been stopped by some men at the entrance of the town. Mr. Lyndon reflected bitterly on his son's negligence in caring so little for his safety. Philip bit his lip to keep down his rising passion. He wisely attempted no justification of himself, which he saw, by the expression of his father's face, would not be listened to for a moment, but retreated into the surgery, and occupied himself with his usual work.

When he went on his rounds, it was surprising how many inquiries there were for Stanton. Persons who were unknown to Philip stopped him in the street to express their sorrow at the accident, and their wishes for Stanton's quick recovery. Philip was deeply

touched, also, by the interest which was shown in Miss Ainslie. She had evidently taken deep root in the popular estimation. The young surgeon had to parry many questions as to the cause of the disaster. He had to make the most of the restiveness of the horse, and the uncertain light beneath the trees, where the accident had happened.

Blanche lay that morning with her head in violent pain, accompanied by a distressing sensation of dizziness and confusion, and her sorrow for her cousin did not tend to hasten her recovery. The tie between them had been, in some respects, closer than that between her brother and herself, for Reginald was apt to look at things solely from his own point of view, and to be unable to admit that another person could rationally take a different one. In various difficulties connected with her work in the parish or in the school, Blanche had often appealed to Stanton, rather than to Reginald ; sure of kindly counsel from the one, where from the other she would have received advice which was too apt to take the form of a command. George had occasionally been a little suspicious of the state of things between his brother and his lady-love, but it was impossible even for him to distrust Stanton long ; and

Blanche was so very open in her preference for him, that George was obliged to come to the conclusion that there was no foundation for his fears.

In the intervals of Blanche's grief for Stanton, her thoughts naturally turned towards Philip. When he had first approached her to examine her injuries, she had shrunk from his touch with a kind of instinctive fear; which, though he had noticed it, he had attributed to her dread of the pain which he might give her. His extreme gentleness, however, had dispelled her fear, but she still felt that she would rather have seen another face than his at her bedside.

No one was up early that morning at Mrs. Mansfield's; in fact, George and Harry were the only ones who came downstairs. Reginald did not appear till dinner, nor did Mrs. Mansfield, though she visited the invalids from time to time. Some of Stanton's worst symptoms had abated towards the evening, and the consequent feeling of relief made the party at the dinner-table a brighter one than might have been expected.

'I do not understand yet,' observed Mrs. Mansfield, when they were in the drawing-room, 'how it was that the accident happened.'

'The fact that the Lyndons had been

dining out gives the explanation,' replied George.

'As far as young Lyndon was concerned, the dining out had nothing to do with it,' interposed the curate.

'Well, I don't know which of them was driving,' observed George; 'but they were going at a furious pace, and we were on the right side of the road, close to the bank.'

'Mr. Philip was sober enough, I am sure,' replied Reginald. 'He snatched Blanche from under the horse's feet, at the risk of his own life. She would most likely have been killed if he had not, for the horse was just coming down upon her. He bounded nearly over Stanton.'

'They deserve prosecuting for driving in that style,' said George. 'By-the-bye, Reginald,' he added, 'you had better send Philip Lyndon about his business, and have old Wood.'

'I cannot do that very well,' was the reply; 'for Lyndon offered, in a most gentlemanly way, to give place to Mr. Wood, if we wished, and I told him we could not think of such a thing.'

'The deuce you did !' exclaimed George.

'Well, I was very much struck with his conduct at the overturn. He showed such pre-

sence of mind and disregard of himself; and whatever he is, George,' said the curate, reproachfully, 'he is entitled to be treated like a gentleman.'

'You are, perhaps, not aware that he is an admirer of Blanche's.'

'A what?' asked Reginald, who had not caught the word.

'A lover!' replied George, in a louder tone.

'Lord bless me! you don't say that?' exclaimed the curate.

'There's no doubt about it,' answered George.

'I wish I had known that before,' observed Reginald, thoughtfully. 'However, I do not see how I could have acted differently in the circumstances.'

'Stanton mentioned it to me,' said Mrs. Mansfield, 'and he meant to have told you. I questioned Blanche about him the other day, and I don't fancy there is much danger of her liking him.'

'I should think not, indeed,' interposed George.

'In fact, I fancy she is rather afraid of him,' continued Mrs. Mansfield; 'for it has struck me, lately, how timid she has been at being

out alone, and she used to trip away and be afraid of nothing.'

'Blanche will be well again in a few days, I dare say,' observed Reginald, 'and we may not want a medical man again for a long time to come; so very likely it will not be of much consequence, and I will give her a word of advice on the subject.'

CHAPTER XIV.

WAITING.

‘Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
For loyal to the uttermost am I!’

TENNYSON.

IN a few days Reginald took his sister back to their lodgings. She went rather reluctantly, as she did not feel equal to the strain upon her spirits which being alone so much involved, for Reginald was sure to be out a great deal. She also felt some dread of Philip Lyndon's visits. It was only the first of these objections, however, that she mentioned to her brother, and which he combated by saying that he should not be out very much at present, as he had not quite got over his share of the accident ; and he concluded by adding that he was sure Mrs. Mansfield had enough on her hands with Stanton, especially as she had not been nearly

so well during the last few days. On the other side of the question, Blanche reflected, that it would be quite as well to be more out of George's way now that he was a little more demonstrative in his attentions. She could not help thinking that, somehow or other, he did not seem so pleasant as he used to be. Philip's visits were not so formidable as Blanche expected. He did not stay many minutes when he came, and he made no reference, either by word or look, to their previous interviews. His manner was very gentle, even almost tender; but though he evidently guarded it from becoming at all demonstrative, Blanche had a continual fear of what might be coming, which made her feel uncomfortable.

Philip had entered the drawing-room at Victoria Terrace for the first time with a kind of hush of subdued emotion. Blanche was not in the room, and he had to wait a few minutes before she came downstairs. There was the piano on which she played, the books she read, her work-basket on the table, and some sketches on the walls, of which he had heard Fanny speak as Blanche's doing. Various little elegant trifles, incidental to the pursuits which fill up a lady's leisure hours, lay about the room, each of which seemed pervaded with a

fragrance that nothing but the touch of her hand could have given. On every succeeding visit, Philip's mind gathered in some image, on which his memory might linger during the long hours of his often sleepless nights, or in his solitary rides across the country :—the artistic arrangement of the flowers upon the table,—the graceful folds of the delicate drapery of Blanche's dress,—or, as happened one bright afternoon, when, as she altered her position, a sunbeam lighted up the soft waves of her hair and her sweet pure face with a radiant glory, and made her, he thought, look like an angel in one of the pictures of an old Italian painter. The very scent of the mignonette, as it came in through the open window, lingered in his memory with a sweetness which half belonged to her gentle presence.

He soon discovered, with sorrow, that she did not gain strength as fast as he expected; and, however much it went against the grain with him, he felt compelled to suggest to Mr. Ainslie that a few weeks' change of air would be advisable for his sister. It was arranged that she should go on a visit to a friend who lived in the country, an invitation to whose house had been put off on one account or other several times.

Blanche had taken particular care to conceal from Philip what was the day of her departure, and accordingly one morning when he called at Victoria Terrace he found that the bird had flown. He turned away from the door, passing between the roses and veronicas, with a cloud upon his brow. He had seen her only two days before, and when he had asked about her journey, she had put him off, and now she had left without telling him. He felt that he had little chance of making the impression that he wished, while she had that fear of him which he had seen on one or two occasions. He tried to think that this feeling was unreasonable, but he knew—alas! too well—the fierceness of the passion which sometimes took possession of him, and the recklessness into which the sense of his sin had often goaded him. The very impetuosity with which he loved Blanche, and the ardour with which he wished to woo her, were, he felt, obstacles in his path towards winning her. How to efface the impression that he had made, without a radical alteration in his own nature, he did not know; neither did he feel that he had much power to modify this without Blanche's help and sympathy, which he was afraid he had little chance of gaining. He determined, that when she should return

he would be more cautious in his manner, and thus, if possible, disarm her prejudice against him.

Stanton, in the meantime, had been steadily improving. Of a cheerful temper, a healthy frame, and a contented, well-stored mind, he had no drawbacks. Philip got into a way of staying when he came. Stanton was the best substitute he could find for Blanche, and he could trace in his countenance, and sometimes in his expression, a resemblance to those features which were so deeply engraven on his memory.

Stanton, in spite of the feelings of suspicion which he entertained towards Lyndon, partly from George's representations, became interested in his visits. He saw him in quite a different aspect from any in which he had before. There was a gentleness, even a sweetness, in Lyndon's manner, that was the more winning because there was always present the impression of the energy and the strength of will which were so characteristic of his nature. Stanton could not help remarking that the young surgeon's visits were carefully arranged so as to take place when George was likely to be absent from the house, and he often wondered in what consisted the cause of difference between them. It was all the more remarkable, because George, though

he was tenacious of what he considered his rights, and bent upon punishing any one who had seriously offended him, usually conducted himself, in his personal relations with an adversary, in a manner which savoured more of indifference than of asperity; and if he did cherish ill-will, he concealed it under a mask, either of prudence or of policy. On asking George one day what had produced the enmity which was evidently so strong between them, he had replied that *he* had no objection to tell the tale if Lyndon had not. Stanton, however, did not feel himself to be on sufficiently intimate terms with Philip to ask such a question, and he had a kind of instinctive consciousness that his brother might not come out of the investigation quite so scatheless as he pretended. Stanton was, therefore, obliged to put by the inquiry, and to keep it in reserve till the necessity for its prosecution should arise. If he should see any chance of Lyndon's becoming successful in his wooing of Blanche, then the time would have come at which he should not hesitate to proceed to decided action. This, however, upon serious reflection, seemed to be scarcely within the range of possibility. Everything about Lyndon appeared to be so foreign to the mental and moral atmosphere in which

Blanche moved, that the very thought of him in such a connection would, Stanton imagined, be simply repugnant to her feelings; and with regard to Lyndon, his attention to her must be dictated by a mere transient fancy, which would in time die a natural death from want of sustenance.

Blanche, during her absence, had resolutely determined to put away from her mind all thoughts about Philip, and in some measure she succeeded. There were times, however, when his image would present itself before her with a pertinacity which would not be baffled. Sometimes it would come with a softened aspect, which reminded her of him as he had been since the accident, but at others it would bring back the impression which his fiery passionateness, his impetuosity, and his remorse had made upon her, and also that instinctive fear of him which she could not conquer. She had made up her mind that on her return she would keep him more at a distance, and endeavour by a gentle, though not unkind firmness, to prevent any repetition of the scenes which she so much dreaded.

Several weeks passed on. Autumn's brilliant garb had been torn ruthlessly away by the destroying winds; the woods had assumed the

darker hue of winter, and the trees in the Walks stood up bare and distinct against the sky.

One afternoon, just as the early twilight was beginning to cast its shade and the evening star was appearing in the western sky, Philip was passing quickly up a street which led into the Walks, when, as he reached the corner, he came upon Miss Ainslie. Both started at the suddenness of the encounter, and Philip, taken by surprise, had no time to modify the ardour of his greeting, which brought the colour into Blanche's cheek and caused her to infuse more coldness into her manner than she intended. She appeared to be in perfect health, and there was the same radiant sweetness in her face which had so attracted him at first. As she was evidently in a hurry, he made no attempt to detain her, beyond an expression of pleasure at seeing her so well; and raising his hat, he passed on down the Walks with a bitter sense of mortification in his heart.

Blanche tripped on a little faster than before; she was not sorry when she reached her aunt's to find that George was not at home. He had taken the opportunity of spending a fortnight at his friend's house during Blanche's visit there, and he had then been much more de-

voted in his attentions to her than before ; indeed, he had seemed to take it for granted that he had the claims of a lover over her, and because she had not agreed to his estimate of their relative positions, he had shown an authoritativeness and a want of temper which were very unpleasant.

George, in the meantime, began to think that he had made a mistake ; and that if Blanche was not to be lost to him, it would be advisable to show her the most amiable side of his character. Accordingly, after her return, he was careful to confine himself to attentions which might be rendered by a cousin, hoping thus to disarm her suspicions, and at the same time, by a constant deference to her wishes, and a pleasantness of manner which he knew well how to assume, to cherish that affection for himself, of which, hitherto, he had been rather neglectful.

Blanche was, however, only partially reassured ; but she had no dislike to her cousin George, and she hoped that his change of manner would prove to be the beginning of a state of feeling between them, which, if it were not likely to be quite so satisfactory as was that between Stanton and herself, might, at any rate, bear some resemblance to it.

Blanche saw nothing of Philip for several days. She divined that he was offended, which was, indeed, the case. However, she had no objection to a little longer respite from his attentions.

One evening, as Lyndon passed the school, he heard the sound of music. He stopped to listen. They were singing an old carol of the sixteenth century. Its quaint cadences fell pleasantly upon the ear. The door stood temptingly open, and Philip stepped inside the porch that he might be concealed from the passers-by. Some one was playing the harmonium, perhaps it was Miss Ainslie. Now and then they stopped to repeat some faulty passage. When they had sung it through satisfactorily there was a little bustle, and Philip had scarcely time to get out of the porch before the door opened. He drew back into the shadow of the angle, and the next moment they came out ; the boys in a somewhat disorderly fashion, and then the teachers. There was a slide just outside, of which the boys made good use, while some of the teachers nearly slipped down over it. Miss Ainslie was the last, except some one who was putting out the gas. She came quickly out with her music-book in her hand. When she reached the slide she slipped ; she did not fall,

however, for a strong hand held her up. She had no need to inquire whose it was.

‘Mr. Lyndon!’ she said in some surprise.

‘I beg your pardon,’ he said humbly. ‘I was listening to the music. I did not mean to intrude.’

There was something so comical in the incident, and also in his explanation of it, that Blanche could not help smiling.

‘A friend in need, is a friend indeed,’ she replied.

He could not see her smile, but he could hear it in her voice. He did not answer, and he did not offer to carry her music-book; perhaps he thought that he had done enough already. Blanche could not help wondering what had come over him. Any way, she thought, it was rather a pleasant change. He was so silent that she began to be afraid that something unpleasant was brewing. However, nothing came of it, and he parted from her at the end of the Terrace, with more stiffness of manner than she had ever before seen in him.

‘Well,’ she thought, as she heard the quick sound of his retreating footsteps on the frozen ground, ‘I suppose he will soon have gone through all his changes of mood, and will have to begin again.’

Philip sat up most of the night in his consulting room, but he came to no conclusion, except that there was nothing to be done but to wait. Neither love nor pity seemed at present to have any share in Miss Ainslie's heart ; and as far as he could see, nothing that he could do would have any influence over her. It was clearly not the time to make his confession. Indeed, it seemed likely enough that that time would never come. He felt that it would be dishonourable to proceed with his wooing until Blanche should know of the cloud which hung over his life ; but she evidently wished to show him that she had made up her mind to give him no encouragement, and he felt that the best way of furthering his own interests would be simply to let her alone, and leave it to time and some more favourable circumstances to bring his wishes nearer to their accomplishment. But he felt doubtful whether he should be long able to endure the strain of such suspense. Remorse for the past, hopelessness—should this dearest wish of his heart fail—of the future, added to the sense of his own unworthiness, and the impossibility which he felt, in his present circumstances, of attaining to anything better, formed a whole which made his spirit sink within him.

CHAPTER XV.

COUSIN KATE.

‘In pleasant converse passed the hours away.’

ANON.

THE next day was the one on which Cousin Kate was expected to arrive on a short visit. The train, which was due at midnight, did not come until two o'clock, on account of the snow which blocked the line. Tom had been ordered to bed several times by Fanny, but every time that she thought he was gone he turned up again, till at last he ensconced himself in an easy chair, where he went to sleep and was forgotten. When Cousin Kate and Philip came, however, he woke up, and was marched off to bed by his brother with ignominious haste. In a few minutes the other three had sat down to the table, and were enjoying the hot coffee,

which was very pleasant to Miss Kate after her cold journey, and to Philip after his long waiting.

‘Poor Tom!’ said his sister. ‘You might have let him have some supper after he had stayed up so long, Philip.’

‘No. I told him to go to bed a long time before I went to the station. How was it that you let him stay up, Fanny?’

‘I thought he was gone. I did not know that he was in the room all the time.’

‘You have not forgotten how to give the word of command, I see, Philip,’ said his cousin, smiling.

‘I don’t get obeyed, it seems,’ he replied.

‘It is a long time—between four and five years, I think—since I saw you, Philip,’ said Kate.

‘Ah!’ he answered, ‘it seems a lifetime almost since then.’

‘It does seem a long time,’ observed his sister. ‘I was at school then, and so was Tom; I wonder what the next four years will bring!’

Philip could not repress a sigh. What, indeed, would they bring to him? Shame, disappointment, and disgrace, or—but that seemed impossible.

'We must keep brave hearts, whatever happens,' said his cousin, struck by the expression of his face.

'We are getting quite sentimental, I declare,' said Fanny.

'How do you like D——?' asked Kate.

'Oh, very well; but it is rather dull. We have not many friends.'

'We have some nice ones, though,' said Philip. 'You will see them to-morrow if you are inclined to help decorate.'

'I shall be very glad. Your nice friends are the Mansfields, I suppose, whom you have mentioned in your letters, Fanny?'

'Yes. Mrs. Mansfield is a dear old lady. She is just the person one would like for an aunt.'

'You had better set your cap at her nephew, then,' suggested Philip.

'Capital idea. I think I shall. I wonder I never thought of that before. I hope there will be some parties while you are here, Kate.'

'I hope so too. You used to be wild after parties, Philip.'

'I am getting old and sober now, Kate,' he answered.

'That's a change, Philip, is it not?'

'He's making quite a new beginning,' said

his sister. 'He goes to church, and does not approve of flirting.'

'That is a good hearing, at any rate.'

'Isn't it? Of course there is a reason for it, my dear.'

'Fanny!' said Philip, remonstratingly.

'I stand rebuked,' replied his sister. 'Most things have a cause, but this has not.'

Cousin Kate glanced from one to the other. Philip's face betrayed the feeling which he fain would have concealed; his sister's was sparkling with not unkindly mischief.

'Tom is grown, I thought, from the glimpse I had of him,' remarked the cousin. 'He has not got old and sober too, has he?'

'No, indeed. He is insufferably mischievous. I don't know what to do with him, I am sure.'

'He will be all right when he has got over his kitten tricks,' said Philip.

'I should like him to be better than you, Phil.'

'Well, I hope he will. He is better tempered, at any rate.'

'He has the best temper of you all, I think,' remarked Cousin Kate.

'I don't think that I have a bad temper,' said Fanny.

‘Not exactly ; but you are rather sharp,’ replied her brother.

‘Well, I think I have enough to make me sharp.’

‘I think you have, Fanny,’ was Philip’s answer.

‘How is uncle now ?’ asked Kate.

‘He is not well,’ replied her cousin, gloomily.

‘Is he come in yet, Fanny ?’

‘I have not heard him ?’

‘It is time we went to bed, I am sure,’ said the cousin.

‘We shall have Tom routing us up in the morning if we oversleep ourselves on such an important day,’ observed Philip.

He had just opened the door for his cousin, when he closed it again hastily, laying his hand on her arm, as she looked at him in surprise. An unsteady step was heard passing, and then ascending the stairs ; this, evidently, from the pauses and shufflings, was a difficult feat. The three stood still without looking at each other. Philip’s cheek flushed, while that of his sister grew pale, and the cousin’s face became clouded with deep sadness. After a minute’s pause Philip opened the door.

‘Don’t go to him, Philip,’ said his sister, imploringly.

‘You need not be afraid, Fanny,’ he replied soothingly, as he left the room and followed his father.

‘They are both so violent sometimes, that they frighten me dreadfully,’ said Fanny. ‘If Philip will but keep cool he will manage. He has been better tempered lately, if it will only last.’

‘I hope it will, indeed,’ was the reply.

They listened till they heard Mr. Lyndon’s door shut, and then they went upstairs.

‘Perhaps the lady will have a good influence over him,’ observed the cousin, as she began to make her arrangements for the night. ‘You referred to the affair in your letters, but I did not give much heed to it, remembering how he used to flirt. Who is she?’

‘You shall find that out to-morrow. She is sure to be at the school. You must look for the most unlikely lady for him to take a fancy to, and the most unlikely one to favour him.’

‘Dear me. I am afraid it will be an unlucky affair.’

‘There is no doubt about that,’ was the reply. ‘They are very particular kind of people, and I am afraid that poor Philip has already been weighed in the balance and found wanting.’

‘I have always thought that a great deal might be made of him if he were to fall into judicious hands,’ remarked Kate.

‘I cannot say that I should like to undertake the task,’ replied his sister, ‘but then I should not be judicious. However, I am afraid he has made a mistake this time, and I expect we may look out for squalls before long.’

‘You must be as patient as you can, then, dear Fanny.’

‘Well, I do try ; but Philip is enough to aggravate a saint when he is out of humour, and he makes Tom a great deal worse than he would be. It will be the ruin of Tom, if he does not mind. I am sure, with the three, I am almost at my wit’s end sometimes.’

‘I dare say you are, dear Fanny,’ said her cousin, affectionately. ‘I often think of you and wonder what you are doing, when we are so quiet and comfortable, for Mr. and Mrs. Stanley are as kind as if they were relations, and little Annie is an affectionate child. I have no trouble with her ; I often wish that you were as happy as I am.’

‘We might be, if father and Philip were different. I have been used to father so long, that I generally make up my mind to that

trouble ; but when Philip is so tiresome, it seems too much to be endured. However, I shall have to endure it, I suppose, so it is of no use talking.'

CHAPTER XVI.

DECORATING.

‘For lover’s heaven must passe by sorrowe’s hell.’

SPENSER.

THE snow which had fallen during the night, had mantled with its pure tracery every branch and twig of the trees upon the Walks, making them look like a scene in fairyland. The air was keen and fresh, producing an elasticity of spirits and a buoyancy of frame which were delightful. Blanche and the two Misses Lyndon were the first upon the scene at the school. They were soon joined by Harry and Stanton, and not long after by Tom, who made his appearance as soon as he could be spared from the surgery. There was plenty to do, and for a time not many hands to do it, though the curate and a few others came before long.

The boys seemed to have no inclination for regular work. They raced in and out, leaving the door open behind them, and giving, as Fanny said, more trouble than they saved. If they were quiet for a minute, they were sure to be devising some piece of mischief, and when Stanton chased them from the school-room, they snow-balled every one outside whom they dared attack ; Tom even sent a snowball, from round a corner, at the curate, which knocked off his hat, to his infinite disgust.

‘ When they have let the steam off,’ Blanche said, ‘ they will come in and set to work,’ which they accordingly did ; and as soon as Blanche perceived signs in Tom of a safety-valve being required, she despatched him on an errand which had been waiting for a convenient opportunity.

The curate, who suspected that Tom was the culprit who had directed the blow which was aimed at his dignity, as well as at his hat, eyed that youngster rather askance ; perceiving which Master Tom showed considerable ingenuity in avoiding the contiguity of the injured gentleman.

‘ You should have been here on the 5th of November, Cousin Kate,’ said Tom, as he and Harry were standing near, breaking up some

of the large boughs into pieces of a more convenient size ; ' we had a jolly time.'

' And plenty of noise and bustle, I suppose ?'

' Oh yes, we had plenty of that ; and there was a grand procession, with torches, and *such* bonfires ! We burnt the Guy in the Amphitheatre.'

' Where is that ?' asked the cousin.

' Oh ! you must see that to-morrow. It's where they used to fight with wild beasts in the Roman times—like St. Paul at Ephesus. We play at it sometimes, and it is such fun !'

' Tom makes a splendid lion,' observed Harry. ' Doesn't he ramp and roar !'

' He will do that well, I have no doubt,' said Blanche ; ' and what are you, Harry ?'

' Oh, I am generally a Christian, and have to be eaten,' replied Harry.

' And we got some gunpowder, and made such a lot of crackers,' said Tom, recurring to the original subject.

' And we had them strewn all about the house,' said Fanny ; ' and put under the feet of our chairs.'

' I should not have liked that,' said Cousin Kate.

' Well, we did not,' was the reply.

‘It was so funny to see how you and Phil jumped up,’ said Tom, laughing at the remembrance. ‘You were quite cross, Fanny, but Phil only laughed.’

‘I was really frightened,’ replied Fanny.

‘I should have been cross, I am sure,’ said Blanche.

‘I don’t think you can be cross, Miss Ainslie,’ remarked Tom.

‘Oh yes, I can, occasionally.’

‘And poor Jane,’ continued Fanny,—‘just as she was bringing in the dinner, one went off in the kitchen, and down went the pheasants, dish and all!’

‘What did uncle say to that?’ asked her cousin.

‘Oh, we did not tell him. I rushed out into the kitchen, and we got another dish, and the pheasants came in pretending that nothing was the matter.’

‘Fanny had to stroke Jane the right way of the fur, after that. Wasn’t she in a tantrum!’ said Tom. ‘But I did not mean the cracker to go off just then, for I got no dinner that day—except some biscuits that I stole out of the consulting-room, and that was not much.’

‘You did not deserve any, I am sure,’ replied his cousin.

Tom, by this time, was quite tired of standing still, and he and Harry raced off into the yard to exercise their energies in snowballing.

Blanche and the two cousins sat together for a long time, and had much talk about school and parish work. Blanche was amused to trace in them the differences from, and the resemblances to, Philip. Both of them, she thought, had considerable mental powers, which in Fanny were but little developed. She seemed never to have fixed her mind upon any definite subject, and consequently its power had been weakened and dissipated. Both of them had enough of Philip's temperament, considerably softened and subdued, to give animation and vivacity to the countenance and manner; but the cousin gave evidence of a more careful training, of more intellectual culture, and of a greater quietness in her demeanour.

'I don't think that I shall ever like school-work as much as you do,' remarked Fanny to Blanche. 'You seem to take so much pleasure in it; and then it has all to be given up when one gets married.'

'I don't mean to be married for a long time to come yet,' said Blanche.

'Well, I think you are wise,' rejoined Fanny.

‘Married people are full of cares and troubles. Of course everybody has troubles of one kind or another, but those who are not married escape a great many; and gentlemen are all alike in being selfish and tyrannical.’

‘I don’t think so!’ cried Cousin Kate and Blanche both at once.

‘I consider myself bound to dispute that statement, Miss Lyndon,’ said Stanton, turning round.

He had been fixing a motto on the wall, not far off, and between his hammerings had heard an occasional word or two of the conversation.

‘Oh, I did not know that you could hear,’ was Fanny’s reply.

‘What are the grounds of your opinion?’ he asked.

‘My study of masculine human nature, sir. If we look round on our acquaintances we shall find that most of the gentlemen are utterly absorbed in either business or pleasure, while their wives and families are tyrannised over and neglected.’

‘That is not fair, Miss Lyndon,’ said Stanton, a little indignantly; ‘nor is it true, either.’

‘I quite agree with Stanton,’ said Blanche.

‘My cousin’s statement is rather too sweeping, certainly,’ admitted Kate.

‘I am sure I know several gentlemen,’ said Stanton, ‘who are as unselfish and as devoted to duty as ladies can be, though they don’t make any fuss about it.’

‘I am afraid we are all selfish,’ was the reply. ‘But here is Mr. Ainslie ; we will ask him what he thinks. Mr. Ainslie, am I not right in saying that everybody’—Fanny did not like to say ‘all gentlemen’ to the curate—‘is selfish?’

‘Human nature, speaking generally,’ observed Reginald, ‘is, as we know, a weak and fragile thing, strong only in selfishness and pride ; and the heart of man is, as Scripture informs us, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.’

‘There ! Mr. Stanton,’ said Fanny, triumphantly ; ‘you can say nothing after that, I should think.’

‘I don’t think that my heart is desperately wicked, notwithstanding,’ replied Stanton, as he took up his hammer again and went on with his work.

There was a considerable interval during luncheon-time. Blanche and Reginald accompanied their cousins back to the house, where they found George and Mrs. Mansfield.

‘The new Miss Lyndon seems very pleasant,’ observed Blanche.

‘Is she as handsome as her cousin?’ asked George.

‘No; but she is decidedly good-looking,’ replied Stanton.

‘She is not quite so graceful or so lively,’ remarked Blanche.

‘I thought she seemed very sensible,’ observed Reginald.

‘She lives at Chatham, does she not?’ asked Mrs. Mansfield.

‘No,’ replied Harry; ‘her father lives there, but she is a governess at Manchester.’

‘Oh, she is a governess, is she?’ said George.

‘She is none the worse for that,’ replied Reginald, reprovingly. ‘What can be nobler than to train the mind and to mould the spirit of a child?’

‘That is very true indeed,’ interposed Mrs. Mansfield.

‘It is possible, I think,’ continued the curate, ‘that if Miss Lyndon had been engaged in the same kind of work, she would have been more estimable. The concentration of mind which is involved in the earnest and faithful pursuit of some definite occupation, is a great help towards the formation of a worthy character. Miss Lyn-

don is very deficient in that solidity and balance of mind which are so necessary in a woman.'

'I think she has naturally a very sweet disposition and many good qualities,' observed Blanche.

'She has many pleasing and amiable qualities,' replied Reginald, 'and also, I believe, good capabilities, if only they had been properly developed. If, before it is too late, and her character becomes too firmly fixed, she were to marry a sensible man who would be able to influence her, she might make an admirable woman after all.'

'You had better take her in hand yourself, Reginald,' said George.

'George,' answered the curate, with some severity, 'you must be aware how unfit Miss Lyndon is to be the wife of a clergyman.'

'Well, Stanton, you are not in the Church; here is a fine chance for you.'

'I don't think we should be either of us justified in making sure of success with Miss Lyndon,' replied Stanton.

'You are quite right, Stanton,' said his mother. 'A gentleman has no right to presume such a thing.'

'I only meant that Stanton had a chance of trying,' George explained.

‘Miss Lyndon is more likely to play with a man, and then turn him adrift,’ observed Reginald.

‘Well, I think it is time we went back,’ said Stanton. ‘We shall not get through to-day unless we make more haste than we have done yet.’

‘I shall come and see what you are all about before the day is over,’ said George, as Stanton went into the hall to wait for Blanche.

The party at the school had by this time increased considerably, but there was work enough for all, with wreaths and paper flowers to make, and mottoes and illuminated texts to be decorated.

There had been considerable bustle outside, at intervals, during the morning, owing to the snowballing. On a louder shout than usual being raised, succeeded by the sound of skirmishing feet, Stanton, at Blanche’s request, went to see what was the matter. He could not help laughing when he opened the door; Philip was the victim this time, and the energy with which he repelled the assault was quite amusing. So vigorously, indeed, did he set to work, that the opposing force was quickly routed; Harry seeking safety round a corner, while Tom, seeing himself deserted by his ally, soon rushed after him.

‘What are they about, I wonder?’ said Blanche to herself.

She was soon satisfied as to the individual assailed, for she heard Stanton say :

‘You may as well come in, Lyndon, and see what we are about ;’ and the next moment he entered with Philip, who showed the effects of the snowballing on his dark hair and beard.

He went up the other side of the room with Stanton, apparently without seeing Blanche, and stood about talking to one or another, occasionally giving a helping hand, and staying some time with his sister and cousin, who had joined Miss Scott.

In the meantime, Reginald, wishing for Stanton’s opinion on some point in dispute, Philip came down the schoolroom to give him the message, and taking up Stanton’s hammer had proceeded with his work, unperceived by Blanche. When she asked her cousin for the scissors, she did not notice that the hand which gave it to her was not his. She went on with her work, and the nailing went on behind her for some minutes.

‘Now I am ready, Stanton,’ she said at length ; ‘I shall be glad if you can help me.’

Down went the hammer, rather more suddenly

than Blanche expected, and it was Philip's voice which answered.

'Your cousin is not here, but I shall be glad to help you if I may.'

Blanche blushed in some confusion and surprise.

'I thought Stanton was here,' she said.

'Shall I not do?' he asked anxiously.

She could not say that he would not, so she directed him to fetch her some evergreens from the heap. He brought her the choicest sprays that he could find, and placed them ready for her, and then he held the wreath to keep it still. Blanche felt that his eyes were watching every movement of her hands, and that they glanced furtively at her face every now and then. She began talking upon some indifferent subject, and he seconded her efforts in a quiet, subdued tone of voice ; but there was something in his manner which betrayed that the under-current was running in quite a different fashion. As she looked up she met his glance, and there was something in it that touched her. It expressed the earnest longing of a tempest-tossed spirit for peace and comfort.

'I ought not to speak, I know,' he said ; 'but I feel that you are offended with me, Miss Ainslie.'

The words did not express what he meant, but he could not say that she was cold without implying that he had a right to expect something else.

‘No, I am not offended,’ she replied, half sorry for him.

‘May I hope that you will be my friend?’ he asked.

‘I should be glad to befriend you in any way that I could,’ she answered; ‘but you must not expect the impossible.’

‘Is it impossible for you to feel kindly towards me?’

‘I do not feel unkindly, I am sure.’

He was not satisfied with either her words or her manner; not feeling unkindly was very different from feeling kindly.

‘I may think of you as a friend, then?’ inquired he.

‘Oh yes,’ she replied, feeling a little caught. ‘What next?’ she thought.

At that moment Stanton came from the other end of the room. Philip rose and advanced to meet him.

‘I will give way to you now,’ he said. ‘I have been taking your place for a short time.’

‘After a fashion,’ thought Blanche.

Philip was rather annoyed at the look with

which Stanton regarded him, for it showed what was passing through his mind, and was not exactly favourable to himself. The next moment he encountered the curate, who made a few remarks about the decorations, and then as his eye fell upon Tom and Harry, who were dodging in and out after each other, he observed:

‘It would be as well, Mr. Lyndon, if you were to speak to your brother about the snowballing; it is all very well for boys among themselves, but they should mind what they are about.’

Philip promised to give the desired caution, and, coming upon Tom, he beckoned him to follow him to a place which was a little sheltered from the general gaze by a large slate that was used as a blackboard, but of which Blanche had a good view.

‘You have been snowballing somebody whom you ought not,’ she heard Philip say, in a rather amused tone.

‘Yes, I have,’ replied Tom, with frank fearlessness, and he tried to twist his jacket collar out of his brother’s firm grasp.

‘Well, mind you don’t do it again, or you will not get off so easily.’

‘All right,’ was Tom’s answer, and wriggling himself free, he set off across the room in such

haste that he ran full tilt against the curate, nearly overturning that gentleman in the collision.

‘Are you going, Lyndon?’ asked Stanton, as Philip moved towards the door.

‘Oh, I shall perhaps look in again further on.’

‘I should not wonder if you do,’ thought Stanton.

‘I rather like Mr. Stanton,’ observed Cousin Kate to Fanny when Miss Scott had left them to speak to Blanche.

‘I dare say he would be very pleased if he did but know,’ replied her cousin. ‘What a pity it is he does not!’

‘Isn’t it a pity?’

‘But it can easily be managed, I dare say, if you particularly wish it. If you say so before Tom, he will tell Harry Mansfield, and Harry will tell his brother.’

‘Oh, that’s the state of affairs, is it? I should think it is rather inconvenient sometimes.’

‘Yes, it is occasionally,’ was Fanny’s reply. ‘I get reports of things that are not intended for my ears, and I expect that some things which happen in our house are related there which would be as well kept in the background. But it is of no use troubling about that. We could not keep Tom and Harry apart if we tried, and if they are together they will talk.’

CHAPTER XVII.

AT CHURCH.

‘The look, the air, that frets thy sight,
May be a token that below
The soul has closed in deadly fight
With some internal fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace,
And cast thee shuddering on thy face.’
A. A. PROCTER.

It was rather late when Philip did ‘look in’ again. Miss Ainslie was not there, neither were the Mansfields, nor was Tom. Perhaps they had gone home. Then it occurred to him that they might be at the church. He stayed long enough at the school to prevent his departure from seeming to be hurried, and then he went in search of the Mansfield party. He saw, as he approached the church, that it was lighted, and he went in gently. Miss Ainslie was standing

on the pulpit stairs, with a bouquet of Christmas roses in her hand, and Stanton was decorating the front panel of the pulpit with a cross made of green leaves on a scarlet ground. Philip approached Stanton and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

‘You have done enough to-day,’ he said.
‘Give me the hammer.’

‘I suppose I must obey,’ said Stanton, ‘considering the quarter from which the order comes.’

Stanton leaned against the front of the seats while Philip went on with his work. It took some time adjusting, certainly, but Stanton thought that he was longer over it than he need have been, especially as Blanche was waiting to arrange the flowers. At last, however, it was done, and the flowers were fixed, Blanche holding them from the top while he fastened them from below. Then there was a cross of Christmas roses to be placed behind the altar. Philip was busy with it when the curate entered. He stood talking to Stanton, and when Blanche came to ask Stanton whether there was any more string, Reginald said :

‘I have just been telling Stanton that I don’t like Lyndon’s helping in this at all.’

‘Why not, Reginald?’ she said, fearful of what he was going to say.

‘I should have wished the offering for the altar to have been placed there by purer hands than his.’

It grieved Blanche to think what he would have felt could he have heard her brother’s words.

‘But, Reginald, he may be penitent for what he has done amiss.’

‘We have no evidence of that,’ was the reply.

‘He’s not a very promising penitent, I am afraid,’ observed Stanton.

It seemed cruel, Blanche thought, for every one to turn against him.

‘If we are too hard on those who sin,’ she ventured to say, ‘we deprive them of influences which might be helpful.’

‘I don’t want to be hard on any one, I’m sure,’ replied Reginald; ‘but I did hope that we should have done this among ourselves. How is it that you are not working, Stanton?’

‘Why, to tell the truth, I am tired,’ said Stanton, who thought that he had better say nothing of how his work had been taken from him.

‘I should have been here before,’ continued Reginald, ‘but I was sent for to see a sick person. It does not seem to me to be at all right,’ he added.

He began walking towards Lyndon, who had just turned round to ask Blanche's opinion on some point, and finding her not there, had come forward at the same moment as the curate.

'You cannot send him away, Reginald,' said Blanche, hastily.

Philip was now too near for Reginald to answer, and Blanche's heart seemed to stand still with apprehension. Just as her brother was going to speak, she bethought herself of the string as a means of escape, and, forestalling both the question Philip was going to ask and her brother's speech, she requested the former to send Tom for some. Philip went instantly to seek Tom, whom he found making a tour of inspection round the church, peeping into all the out-of-the-way corners which were forbidden ground during the time of the Sunday services.

Reginald, meanwhile, thought that if he could secure the hammer and go on with the work, Philip would turn his attention to something else. He could not find it, however, and while he was searching, Philip came back with it in his hand, and noting the curate's dissatisfied air, thought that there was something in the decorations which he did not like, and asked whether he wished to have anything altered.

'It will do, I dare say,' replied Reginald,

rather stiffly, as he turned away; and leaving that part of the church in disgust he joined the Misses Lyndon and Miss Scott, who were working together at some little distance. It was not very long before George came. Philip had, fortunately, just finished what he was doing.

‘Good-evening, Lyndon,’ said George. ‘I did not think that this was much in your line.’

‘Well, I don’t know that it is; but I was just trying what I could do to fill up a gap.’

‘Very kind of you, I’m sure.’

George set to work to help Blanche; and Philip took his place by the side of Stanton. They stood for some minutes, neither speaking. Philip had been a little stung by George’s tone; he watched the two before him, wondering who would lead Blanche to that altar. He thought what it must be to kneel by her side, a regenerated man, feeling that he had cast his sins behind him. He sighed so deeply, as he felt that he dared not hope for such a thing, that Stanton could not help smiling.

“Sighing like a furnace,” Lyndon?” he said.

‘It is of no use sighing, unfortunately,’ replied Philip, so energetically that Stanton smiled again.

‘Come, you young rascal,’ said Philip to Tom, who had been balancing himself on the edge of

one of the seats and, some one touching him in passing, had fallen with a great clatter; 'if you don't mind what you are about you will get excommunicated.'

'Take care that you don't, too,' thought Stanton.

Reginald turned round almost savagely at the noise, and Tom vanished with great expedition.

Blanche was on the point of inquiring whether he was hurt, but on seeing the rapidity with which he made his exit she concluded that it was unnecessary.

'Really!' declared Fanny to her cousin, "'One had need to have eyes in the back of one's head," as my grandmother used to say, to be even with Tom.'

'I have come to a conclusion,' said Kate, as the curate, who had kept near them most of the time, had moved a short distance to show Miss Scott something.

'Indeed! What is it?'

'That Miss Ainslie is the lady whom Mr. Phil has honoured with his devotion. Am I not right?'

'Yes, she is the one,' replied Fanny, with a sigh.

'It is a very good sign that he is attracted by

a lady like Miss Ainslie,' continued the cousin. 'She seems to be gentle and nice, and would have a very good influence over him if she could like him.'

'There is no chance of that,' replied Fanny, shaking her head; 'he is the very last man that she would fancy, I should think. She is sure to marry some prim clergyman or other.'

'Clergymen are not all prim, I am sure. Mr. Stanley is not.'

'Well, they are all stiff in their ways, and judge people harshly,' replied Fanny, as Reginald returned and put a stop to further discussion of the subject.

After Tom had left the church so hastily, he stopped on reaching the porch. Hearing the door open gently in about a minute, he was on the point of starting off again; but on seeing that it was only Harry he changed his mind.

'It's cold here,' said Harry, putting on his overcoat. 'You have not got yours.'

'No, it's such a bother,' replied Tom. 'Oh my! what a lot of cloaks! That's Fanny's, I know, because I pulled the tassel off the other day.'

He reached down his sister's cloak, and put it on; and the two boys ensconced themselves in the warmest corner of the porch. Harry

then produced some apples from his coat-pocket, and they munched away in silence with great satisfaction for some time. When that source of amusement was exhausted, Tom looked about for something to vary the monotony of the situation.

‘I do believe they’ve got the Ten Commandments up there,’ he said, as his eye fell on a black-board on one of the side walls of the porch. ‘No, it ain’t,’ he added; ‘there’s too many of them, and they are too short, besides. I’ve often wondered what it was.’

‘It’s something about being married,’ replied Harry.

‘Being married! What on earth do they want to stick it up there for? Let’s see!’

The top of the board, however, was too high up for Tom to see in the flickering light which the draught caused the gas to give, and he looked round for something to stand upon. There was nothing but a basket which stood in one corner. On that Tom accordingly mounted, and began to read:

“A man may not marry his grandmother.”
The Lord have mercy upon us! Just as if I were to want to marry my grandmother Lyndon. Wasn’t she a cross one!

‘Was she?’ asked Harry.

‘There goes!’ cried Tom, as the basket gave way beneath his weight.

‘There! you have done it now,’ said Harry.

‘Oh, never mind, it’s our’s,’ answered Tom, who looked upon the destruction of property belonging to the family as a very venial offence. ‘It’s what I brought the roses in,’ and he forthwith converted it into a seat, squeezing up Fanny’s cloak into a bunch for the cushion.

‘Grandmother Lyndon used to come for a month every year,’ he continued, as soon as he was comfortably settled. ‘How Phil used to tease her! He hated her because she was so unkind to mother, and I used to play her all the tricks I dared. Fanny was the only one of us that she could endure. She used to quarrel dreadfully with father. Weren’t we all glad when she went away!’

‘I wonder she came, if nobody liked her,’ said Harry.

‘Well, you see, she lived at Uncle Tom’s,’ was the reply. ‘What a treat they must have had with her, to be sure! I dare say they jumped for joy when she went away.’

‘Is she alive now?’ asked Harry.

‘No, she ain’t, for a blessing,’ was the dutiful reply. ‘Uncle Tom was pretty good-tempered, or the same house would not have held them

both. He was always kind to Aunt Kate, though Phil used to say he should not like to have been his wife—I don't know why, I am sure. Harry, when I am married,' added Tom, gravely, 'I shall be very kind to my wife.'

The door at this moment opened, and the party came out of the church just in time to hear Tom's last words.

'Your wife, you monkey!' said Philip. 'What do you want a wife for?'

'I don't want one yet. I'm going to wait a while,' replied Tom, jumping up.

'A very wise resolution.'

'You may get married first.'

'Much obliged for the kind permission,' answered Philip, with a glance at Blanche which brought the colour to her cheek.

He helped her on with her cloak, while Stanton and Reginald were doing the same for the cousins.

'What a mess you have made of your sister's cloak, Tom!' said Kate.

'How did that basket get broken?' asked Fanny.

'Oh, I did that,' replied Tom, 'with standing on it to read the Ten Commandments, or whatever it is.'

'You might have left reading the "Ten

Commandments," as you call them, till you had been tall enough to see,' observed Philip.

'Harry,' said Blanche, 'you surely have not been here all this time in the cold!'

'Tom, you might have had more sense than to keep him here,' said Philip. 'You should remember that everybody is not made of india-rubber and tenpenny nails, like you.'

'Well, it was snowing,' was Tom's reply.

'Snowing, indeed! I would rather be buried in a snow-drift than be sitting in such a draught as this. Run home, both of you, as fast as you can.'

'All right,' said Tom, as he put the crushed basket on his head by way of umbrella. He and Harry set off as fast as they could run; the rest of the party following more decorously.

When they parted, Philip's quick ear detected something different in the tone of Blanche's 'Good-night.' It was softer, and there was more feeling in it. Could it be that he was winning his way a little?

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VISITOR.

‘Alas ! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert ; whence arise
But weeds of dark luxuriance, tares of haste
Rank at the core, though tempting to the eyes,
Flowers whose wild odours breathe but agonies,
And trees whose gums are poison.’

BYRON.

‘COME, Fanny ! How long are you going to be ?’ called Philip impatiently, as he stood at the bottom of the stairs, attired with unusual care in evening costume.

‘I am ready, and Kate will be in a minute,’ replied his sister over the balusters. ‘It’s a wonder that he is ready first,’ she added, as she returned to superintend the last finishing touches of her cousin’s toilette. ‘But it’s because we are going to the Mansfields’, I suppose.’

‘A lady wishes to see you in the consulting-room, sir,’ said Jack, appearing at this moment on the scene.

‘A lady!’ repeated Philip, very impatiently. ‘How provoking! What name did she give?’

‘She did not tell her name; she said it did not matter.’

‘It is tiresome she should have come just now,’ thought Philip, as he went very reluctantly.

In a few minutes Tom’s voice was heard shouting out:

‘Where’s Phil? Oh, he’s not gone, I suppose,’ he added, as his sister and cousin came downstairs radiant in white tarlatane and scarlet opera-cloaks, with roses in their hair.

‘He’s going with us to Mrs. Mansfield’s,’ said Fanny.

‘No, he ain’t,’ replied Tom, ‘and he won’t be able to come for a long time neither, I can tell you, for he’s been sent for to go somewhere in a great hurry. Where is he?’

‘In the consulting-room with some one,’ answered Fanny. ‘Well, I suppose it is of no use our waiting for him, then,’ she added. ‘Come, Kate;’ and the cousins tripped off together.

Philip had entered the consulting-room somewhat hastily, but as soon as he got inside the door he stopped. A lady was standing by the fire. Her graceful figure was clothed in fur and velvet. As she turned she revealed a face of exquisite beauty. Her complexion was of a dazzling brilliancy, her hair of a rich glossy brown, and her eyes of a clear deep blue. Philip's cheek grew pale, and he stood like one who had received a violent shock.

'You see I have found you out,' the lady said, as she advanced to meet him.

He went forward and stood on the other side of the fireplace, with his elbow leaning on the mantelshelf.

They looked at each other steadily for a minute. Hers was an inquiring gaze, while the expression of his eyes was that of a stern, almost sullen repression.

'Philip,' she said at length, 'I see that you have forgotten the past.'

'I wish I could forget it,' he replied, in a voice that did not sound like his own, so hoarse and hollow was it.

'Your cruel letter broke my heart,' she said, looking at him with kindling eyes. 'I have not forgotten that. And I have not forgotten how you left me to go you cared not whither.'

‘ I could not meet you again, after what had happened,’ he answered.

‘ What had happened ?’ she repeated impatiently. ‘ He deserved it for his cruelty to me. I had got to hate him, Philip. I thought that I loved him once, but when I saw you I knew that I never had. I loved and trusted you, false and fickle as you were.’

Philip might have taunted her with the fact that it was she who had sought his love, not he hers ; but he only glanced at her across the fireplace, and then fixed his eyes resolutely on the floor. He had long realised the truth that vanity and passion had had more share in leading him astray than had love. She broke out into vehement reproaches against him for what she termed his cowardice and treachery. He listened at first in silence, with compressed lips and downcast brow ; as she went on, however, his anger darkened like the storm-cloud, until at length, stung beyond endurance by her taunts, he answered her in tones which quelled her passion in an instant. When he ceased to speak there was a silence like that which follows a crash of thunder, and which she broke by vehement protestations of affection, to which he listened with a slight curl of the lip, expressive

of mingled bitterness and disdain. The lady looked at him with flashing eyes.

‘Philip,’ she said tauntingly, ‘your memory is very conveniently short; perhaps you have forgotten that your life is in my hands?’

‘Take it, then,’ he said quietly.

There was no sound for a minute but that of Philip’s quick, short breathing, as he stood with the cold dew gathering on his forehead.

‘I do not wish that,’ she said in a softened tone. ‘I hear that you are not married,’ she added presently.

‘No,’ he answered. ‘Thank God,’ he said to himself, as he thought of Blanche, with a shudder.

‘You love, and you wish to be married, Philip. Is that it?’ she asked. ‘I am married, now. I waited for you long, but you did not come. You are not cut out for a saint, and will never make one,’ she continued, as he did not speak. ‘I suppose it is of no use asking who your charmer is, but others will tell me. I made out where you lived, and came while they were gone to the station. It is time to go; the carriage will be waiting for me at the corner of the street. Let us part friends.’

She held out her hand, which he took reluctantly.

‘Ungracious man!’ she said. ‘I hope when we meet again, you will be in a better humour.’

Tom, in the meantime, had gone into the surgery, and had written down the message which had come for his brother, when it struck him that Philip might set off to Mrs. Mansfield’s without going into the surgery, and he resolved to intercept him as he should come out of the consulting-room. He accordingly stationed himself in the passage for that purpose, whiling away the time by twisting himself into all the various shapes that he could think of. He was surprised, as he stood there, to hear a woman’s voice, apparently in passionate accusation, and then Philip’s deep tones in angry reply.

Surely something was passing within besides a medical consultation! As there was no knowing how long they might be, Tom hesitated whether he should not knock at the door, and yet he scarcely dared to do so, as Philip was evidently not in a very good humour, and he had a great dislike to be interrupted in a consultation.

While Tom was debating with himself as to what he should do, the tones became lower and

more gentle, and in a few minutes the door opened somewhat suddenly. Tom instinctively shrank back a few steps. A lady came out closely muffled, followed by Philip, whose face was dark as a thunder-cloud, as he opened the door for his visitor. The lady said, 'Good-night !' to Philip, with a kind of airy gaiety, adding that she should see him soon again, and tripped away.

Tom, who had been retreating towards the surgery, which was at the other end of the passage, was going to speak as Philip closed the door behind the lady ; but, on seeing his brother approaching him with two or three determined strides, he retreated precipitately, followed by Philip, who, without giving Tom time to speak, seized him by one arm, and, taking a cane which lay upon the counter, commenced chastising him vigorously. Tom at first resisted with all his might, but on finding that his kicks and struggles only brought upon himself severer punishment, he resigned himself to his fate, until Philip, having spent the heat of his passion, flung him on the floor, with an injunction to mind what he was about, or he would have another presently. Tom scrambled up, and gliding out of the surgery, took refuge in the stable, where he

crouched down on a heap of straw in an unoccupied corner.

As Philip laid down the cane, his eye fell upon the message, and it occurred to him that perhaps it was for that his brother was waiting, and not for the purpose which he had suspected. He wished that he had not been quite so sudden in his judgment of the supposed culprit, but had given him an opportunity of explaining. However, it could not be helped now, and it would perhaps give Tom a salutary lesson. Having come to this conclusion, Philip set off at once to see the patient to whom he had been summoned.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. MANSFIELD'S PARTY.

'O hateful spell of Sin ! when friends are nigh,
To make stern Memory tell her tale unsought,
And raise accusing shades of hours gone by,
To come between us and all kindly thought.'

KEBLE.

By the time that Philip returned home, it was very late for going to the party, and he felt that, had it been anywhere else than at Mrs. Mansfield's, he should willingly have stayed at home ; but he had been looking forward to this evening with such delightful anticipations, that it seemed very hard to have to give it up. He decided to go, but as he walked towards the house he realised how much his mind was out of harmony with the pleasure which he hoped to have enjoyed. Since he had stood waiting for his sister and his cousin, he seemed to have stepped back into that past

which he would so willingly have forgotten, and there appeared to be no means by which he could bridge the chasm that lay between himself and what he so wished to reach. He had been in a totally different atmosphere from that which surrounded Blanche; one which was foreign to her nature, and from which she would instinctively shrink. The steps with which he approached the door, eager as they would have been a few hours before, were now slow and lingering. He hesitated, even with his hand upon the bell. However, he rang, almost mechanically, and in another minute he was ushered into the room.

Blanche was dancing with George Mansfield. She passed him without seeing him, her dress touching his foot as he stood looking on. There were forms more beautiful than hers, eyes more sparkling and cheeks with richer bloom, but there was none with so sweet an expression, or so gentle a grace. How pure she looked in her snowy drapery, with white camellias in her hair! Philip passed on, and stood just within a large bay-window, watching the dancers. George's manner, he thought, was quite that of a lover; but his love, Philip felt, was very cold and pale beside his own, and he thought that Blanche must feel it also. But

then it struck him, that if she were annoyed at the ardour with which he had expressed his devotion, the calmer style of George's wooing might be more to her taste. George had decidedly the advantage of himself in being regarded by Blanche with that cousinly affection which might so easily glide into a warmer feeling; and yet, as Philip looked at them, he felt within himself a sense of power which, with equal opportunities, would enable him to put his rival in the background, and which, even as it was, might seriously imperil George's chances of success, if it did not quite destroy them. Stanton's estimate of Philip as unscrupulous was not altogether without foundation, for, notwithstanding his determined resolution to come between George and his destined bride, not the slightest pang of compunction disturbed his conscience. He had bent all the energy of his nature on the attainment of the object on which he had set his heart, and any one who stood in his way must beware. He was too intent on the consideration of the moves necessary to win the game—where to make a bold stroke, and where to gain by a skilful manœuvre what he could not seize by force—to think how defeat would affect his adversary, even had he been a worthier one than was George.

By this time the dance was ended, and George led Blanche to a seat inside the bay. He fetched her shawl for her, and Philip, in spite of his previous conclusions, felt a pang of jealousy as he beheld his rival fold the soft blue drapery round her figure. George stood beside her for a short time, and then he left her. As soon as he had moved far enough away, Philip passed round the stand of plants which stood in the middle of the bay, and the next moment he was at her side. A faint blush tinged Blanche's cheek as she greeted him.

‘Fanny told me that she expected you would not be able to come,’ she said.

‘I thought that I would come for an hour or two if I could,’ was his reply. And he gave her some particulars of the accident to which he had been summoned.

‘It must seem incongruous,’ observed Blanche, ‘to leave such a scene, and come to one like this.’

‘Well, perhaps it is ; but I cannot say I thought of that, for my mind was full of something else. I do not come here to-night exactly as a pleasure-seeker, Miss Ainslie.’

She could not mistake his meaning, at least so far as that it had some connection with herself.

‘I was out of tune,’ he continued, ‘and I felt as if I must see you to set me right.’

Blanche thought that was rather an unusual kind of ball-room compliment. She was afraid of asking what was the matter, not knowing what there might be behind.

‘I hope you will get in tune,’ she said gently.

‘May I dance the next dance with you?’ he asked.

‘I do not waltz,’ was her reply.

‘I am sorry for that,’ he said; and he engaged her hand for the following dance.

‘If you are fond of waltzing, you had better go and find a partner,’ observed Blanche.

‘I would rather stay here, if I may,’ he answered.

Blanche scarcely knew whether she was glad or sorry that he stayed. She wondered whether he was getting in tune.

‘We think a great deal of the changes in our outward life,’ observed Philip; ‘but, after all, the alternations in our mental state are often more violent and important, as we are lifted up by hope or cast down by despair.’

‘You use strong words, Mr. Lyndon. No one need give way to despair.’

‘My words represent what I feel,’ he answered. ‘In the calm tranquillity of your spirit you have no idea of what passes in the minds of others.’

‘I don’t know that I am particularly calm,’ she replied.

‘Miss Ainslie,’ he said, after a pause, ‘you seem to me like a gentle angel, who could lead me to the gates of Paradise if you would.’

Both were silent for a minute. Philip’s heart beat wildly with the delicious hope which he sometimes cherished; but a sudden chill came over him at the remembrance of his visitor and of his own treatment of his brother. Blanche, in the meantime, felt that unless she meant to encourage him she ought not to listen to such words. He divined what was passing in her mind, and hastened to forestall its expression.

‘You must forgive me,’ he said, humbly, ‘if I am too presumptuous.’

‘It is of no use forgiving you, for you will do the same again directly,’ Blanche said simply.

A slight smile quivered across Philip’s lip. He felt that he was forgiven, but he also felt that he must not go too far.

‘If you have any particular difficulty,’ Blanche continued, ‘and need counsel, I am sure that my brother would be very glad to give it you. He is very sympathetic when people are in trouble.’

There was rather a peculiar expression on

Philip's face ; it had in it a mixture of shame and bitterness, and also of decided renunciation of the proposal.

'I could not speak to him, for many reasons,' he answered. 'In the first place, I feel sure that the thought of his heart in reference to me is, "Stand off, for I am holier than thou." I know that it is true, but still I cannot seek his sympathy.'

'I am sure, Mr. Lyndon,' replied Blanche, earnestly, 'that my brother would not feel that, if he knew that you——' She stopped in some confusion.

'Knew what ?' asked Philip.

'Knew that you—were sorry,' she answered, a flush passing over her cheek, while that of Philip grew pale at the idea of the curate knowing his difficulties.

Blanche glanced at him, and noted the expression of his face with some dismay.

'Miss Ainslie,' said Philip, 'you must be my counsellor !'

'Mr. Lyndon, I cannot!' replied Blanche, with some dignity. 'I know not your troubles ; and if I did, they would very likely be such as I could neither appreciate nor——' 'sympathise with,' she was going to say, but she felt that would be too hard.

Philip's countenance grew dark. He sat for a few moments with his eyes fixed upon the floor; then he raised them to Blanche's face with a look in which was mingled a kind of beseeching tenderness with an almost unutterable anguish.

'I dare say you are right,' he said, in a tone that was a little unsteady, in spite of his efforts to control it. 'It was folly in me to hope that I could have your sympathy.'

There was a silence of a few minutes, during which Blanche watched the dancers mechanically. George was whirling round with Fanny. Philip sat with his eyes fixed upon the floor. They were screened from observation partly by the plants, and partly by a stout lady who sat at the entrance of the recess.

'I am very sorry that I cause you nothing but trouble and annoyance,' said Philip, in a low, sad tone. 'If I had met you earlier it might, perhaps, have been different; but my life is now a wrecked and wasted one. The past is irrevocable, and the future can be, for me, but a blank.'

His tone, as well as his words, touched Blanche deeply.

'I do not wish to be unkind, Mr. Lyndon,' she said.

‘I believe you do not,’ he answered; ‘but there is a great gulf between us which I am afraid I may not pass.’

‘Perhaps you cannot,’ she said.

She was almost frightened, when she had spoken, at the effect her words produced, so bright was the light which came into Philip’s eyes and irradiated his face like a sudden gleam of sunshine. His whole frame seemed instinct with new life, and quivering with intense eagerness.

‘I feel the power within me,’ he cried, ‘to do it, if——’ He stopped, gazing at her with such a depth of ardent, yet tender and devoted love, that Blanche’s eyes fell before his, and her check became scarlet. She felt as if there was no escape from him, and yet she shrank instinctively.

‘Mr. Lyndon,’ she said, ‘you mistake my meaning. I meant that you could not leave your old life, and begin a new one.’

‘I can—and will!’ he cried earnestly. ‘I have been trying. I know I have failed sometimes, but I shall not again, if you will help me.’

‘I don’t know whether I can,’ said Blanche, a little faintly; ‘and I don’t think that you quite understand what I mean.’

She was just wondering how she could

manage to make him understand, without causing him to be so demonstrative as to attract attention, when Stanton approached. Blanche wished that he had waited a few minutes longer, to give her time to disabuse her lover's mind of the idea which seemed to have taken such firm possession of it, and which might lead to unpleasant consequences. However, her cousin's presence would give her time to think what she should say to Philip, who had risen when Stanton came, and stood with his back to the plants, almost in front of Blanche, looking as if—though he did not quite venture to appropriate her—he was keeping a kind of guard over her.

Stanton was struck with the unwonted colour on Blanche's cheek, and the light in Philip's eyes.

‘What is he up to now?’ he thought. ‘Better late than never, Lyndon,’ he said.

‘Well, so I thought. I was just called out as I was coming.’

‘Have you been dancing?’

‘No, not yet.’

‘I thought I had not seen you,’ replied Stanton. ‘Ainslie will get into your clutches soon, if he does not mind,’ he added.

‘Is his cold worse?’

‘Yes, and he will go out as usual. He went off this morning in the snow, to see some one, when he ought to have been in bed. I should have sent the Rector, if I had been he.’

‘He would not like to do that,’ said Blanche.

‘He will not be able to go to the *conversazione*, if he does not take care,’ observed Philip.

‘I think he would be rather glad of an excuse not to go,’ was Stanton’s answer.

‘How is that?’

‘Why, the Rector has been trying to interest the Carringtons in it, and they have promised to help in the musical department—at least, Mrs. Carrington has.’

‘Does not your cousin like that?’

‘No. They are rather fast sort of people.’

The dance being ended, George came up at this moment with Fanny, who had expressed a wish to sit near Blanche.

‘Who? The Carringtons?’ asked George. ‘I think Reginald is over-particular in that matter. Do you know them?’ he asked of Philip.

‘I have attended the Colonel, but Mrs. Carrington was away. I have met her riding out. She is a handsome woman.’

‘Not my style,’ observed Stanton, a little fastidiously.

‘Nor mine, exactly.’

‘They were expecting a Major and Mrs. Gordon, the Rector said,’ continued George; ‘and Mrs. Carrington told him that Mrs. Gordon was a splendid pianist, and she was sure that she would play for them.’

‘That was very kind of her,’ observed Fanny.

‘Well, Ainslie did not like it, because he thought they would be of the same set; but I think that is going further than need be. Don’t you think so, Lyndon?’

‘Can’t say,’ replied that gentleman.

‘I sympathise with Reginald, in some degree,’ said Blanche; ‘and yet it is difficult to know where to draw the line. It would have been awkward to refuse.’

‘You knew Mrs. Gordon, Lyndon,’ remarked George, turning to him.

‘I don’t remember the name,’ replied Lyndon, struck by George’s manner.

‘She’s married since you saw her.’

‘Indeed?’

‘Had you not heard of it?’

‘I did not know what was her husband’s name,’ Lyndon replied, without looking at George.

There was something so peculiar in his manner, that both Blanche and Stanton noticed it. Philip gave Blanche a quick glance, as if to deprecate her judging him.

‘I hope Ainslie will not make a row about it,’ observed George.

‘The Rector thinks that all is fish that comes to his net,’ remarked Stanton. ‘He looks at it from a business point of view, I suppose.’

‘He is wrong there ; and Reginald is right,’ said Blanche, decidedly. ‘It is not a business matter, and it ought to be looked at from a higher standpoint.’

‘They are beginning to form for the dance,’ observed Lyndon ; and he led Blanche away.

Stanton stood looking on with an unusually discontented air. It was a source of great annoyance to him, to see Lyndon paying so much attention to his cousin ; neither had he derived much satisfaction from watching the previous dance, during which George had been flirting with Miss Lyndon, who seemed nothing loath. He felt vexed with his brother, and disappointed in Miss Lyndon. George, in the meantime, had not been so much absorbed in his attentions to his lively partner, but that he kept as sharp a look-out on the proceedings of

his cousin and Philip as circumstances would permit.

He could not see the expression of their faces, on account of the plants, and of the partial dimness of the light; but he could perceive how very earnest was Lyndon's manner, and he had little doubt of the general purport of their conversation; and, as with his brother, the conclusion at which he arrived when he came into the recess was not exactly a pleasant one.

'Mr. Lyndon,' said Blanche, as soon as a convenient pause occurred, 'I hope you will not allow yourself to be led away by any mistaken idea which you may have formed.'

Philip replied that he was very anxious to come to an understanding, but that he thought the present time and place were not very convenient for what he wished to say.

'They will do very well for what I have to say, Mr. Lyndon,' said Blanche; 'and that is, that I hope the purpose with which you begin the new life you spoke of, will have no reference whatever to me——'

'That is impossible,' interrupted Philip.

'You entirely mistook what I said,' she continued, 'and your interpretation of my words was unjustifiable in the extreme.'

He looked mortified.

‘What I thought you meant,’ he said, ‘was that I had not resolution enough to leave my old life for the better one, in which I might hope——’

‘Mr. Lyndon,’ interrupted Blanche, ‘the better part should be chosen without any reference to whether it will lead to joy or to sorrow.’

‘Your standard is too high for me, Miss Ainslie,’ he said, a little bitterly. ‘I cannot reach it.’

They came too near George, at that moment, for anything more to be said. When they had passed him, Blanche continued :

‘If you will look at the case impartially,’ she said, ‘I think you will see that you place me in a position in which you have no right to put me, Mr. Lyndon.’

‘I don’t wish to do that,’ he answered.

‘You will force me to be harsher than I wish, if you look only from your own point of view,’ she resumed.

‘I will try to look from yours, and I hope you will from mine.’

‘I do not understand yours exactly,’ she replied.

‘I hope you will not judge me till you do,’ he pleaded.

‘I do not wish to judge you, Mr. Lyndon, but you must remember that I cannot help forming an opinion.’

There was something a little ominous in these words, Philip thought. At this moment the dance came to a conclusion, and soon after the company began to depart. Philip drew back a little, though he still kept near Blanche, who was engaged with the leave-taking, Mrs. Mansfield having retired early, leaving her niece to take her place in anything in which the presence of the mistress of the house was required. Kate and Fanny went with the Scotts, who were to leave them as they passed; George was still occupied with some of his friends in a game of billiards, and Stanton was preparing to see his cousin home, when Philip, who had been watching for this opportunity, came forward.

‘It is a pity that you should go out on purpose, Stanton,’ he said, ‘on such a night too. I can see Miss Ainslie home.’

‘But it will be out of your way,’ answered Stanton, who was tired, but who, nevertheless, felt unwilling to trust Lyndon with his cousin.

‘Oh, it’s only a few steps, and that is nothing when one is out,’ replied Philip, who was wishing at that moment that the distance

was much greater. 'You go to bed, Stanton, I can see that you are very tired.'

Stanton agreed, rather unwillingly, and Blanche appearing at that moment, he helped her on with her cloak; Philip, meanwhile, gazing with as much nonchalance as he could assume at the descending snow.

'I wish that I had not let him go with her,' thought Stanton, as they turned from the door. 'There is no knowing what he will say. However, it is not far, and Blanche has plenty of sense, that's one comfort. I must have a talk with her about him, though.'

Blanche would have had no objection to go with Philip, if only she could have been sure that he would be quiet; but of that she feared there was no chance. Had Fanny been behind them with Stanton or Reginald for a companion, she would have been quite comfortable.

Philip felt the touch of Blanche's hand upon his arm with exquisite delight. He said nothing as they walked down the path; but as soon as they were outside the gate, and he had fixed his umbrella firmly against the wind, he began.

'If I understand rightly, Miss Ainslie,' he said, 'I am to conform myself to the idea of——'

‘A Christian gentleman,’ said Blanche, as he hesitated.

‘A Christian gentleman.’ The words seemed to come to him almost in mockery, as he thought of the incident of the early part of the evening. Had his life been ordered after that type, he would not have been in such a position as the interview indicated; and with regard to his treatment of his brother, the impulse, had it then come, would have been resisted. He hoped so to rule himself in the future, as to make such an occurrence impossible.

‘For how long?’ he asked; and then he stopped.

‘For your whole life, of course,’ replied Blanche, in some surprise.

‘How long, I mean, before you would listen to me?’

‘I have not promised to listen to you at all, Mr. Lyndon.’

‘You have not promised, but still——’

‘You have a right to ask, you think?’

‘No, I do not,’ he replied vehemently. ‘It is of no use talking,’ he added; ‘I must hope, Miss Ainslie; you must not deny me that.’

They walked on in silence. The snow kept curling up in Blanche’s face under the umbrella, in spite of all his efforts to shelter her.

‘Prove me as long as you wish, Miss Ainslie,’ he said, as they came to the end of the Terrace. ‘I will not ask for anything; but it would be a great help to me, in the trials through which I must go, if I could see but a little gleam of hope in the far-off future.’

What could Blanche say? They walked past the other two houses, and entered the garden-gate. As he made no attempt to ring the bell, Blanche rang it herself.

‘Do speak to me,’ he said.

She could see by the reflection from the snow that he was very pale, and that an almost desperate light gleamed in his eyes. But still she felt that she could not trust him. His tone and manner gave evidence of the power and passion which she so much dreaded, and yet it seemed cruel to dash away all hope from him.

‘Oh, Mr. Lyndon,’ she cried, in a tone which betrayed the struggle of her feelings, ‘I must have time to think.’

The door opened as she spoke. She went in, and he walked away. Blanche was glad to lay her aching head upon the pillow, but to sleep was impossible. She tried to review her own position, and to decide on what course to take. She seemed to be tossing rudderless upon an ocean, without moon or star to guide her. She

knew that to give one deliberate word of encouragement to a man of his disposition, would be to bind herself to that from which she should not be able to retreat. She felt that it would be like parting with all the joy and brightness of her life, to allow him to entwine her fate with his; and then as she thought of his love for her, so deep and earnest as it seemed—of the anguish of his disappointment, and of the agony of his remorse—she felt touched with tender pity for him in his sufferings. Then, again, the thought would come, that even could she give him her love, his might fade, and leave her desolate and broken-hearted.

Lyndon, in the meantime, went to his own room and sat down with his elbows on the table. The passions which had agitated him during the last few hours, though they had wearied his body, had left his mind in a state of restless and feverish activity. Oh, if he could only take his life in his hand and win his way by some bold stroke, some daring deed, that would leave no room for doubt or uncertainty! To wait and to see his fate, on which hung what was dearer to him than life, trembling in the balance, and to feel no power to influence it, was intolerable. He realised, indeed, that from the very impetuosity of his

nature, he was in danger of wrecking his own hopes. He felt that the evident strife in Blanche's mind with regard to him was itself a hopeful sign of some relenting of feeling; but he also felt,—if that was all which his most earnest pleading could win from Blanche, what chance should he be likely to have when his suit should come under the notice of her brother and of her aunt and cousins? Should he be able to maintain even the slippery footing which he had gained against their united protestations, backed by the dictates of Blanche's own judgment as well as by the influences of her education and surroundings, and by the whole moral atmosphere of her life? Philip groaned in spirit, and his heart sank within him, as he reflected, not only on all these discouragements, but on the obstructions with which his own past had strewn his path, and the perplexities and difficulties in which he was involved.

CHAPTER XX.

CONSEQUENCES.

‘To sit and curb the soul’s mute rage
Which preys upon itself alone ;
To curse the life which is the cage
Of fettered grief that dares not groan.
Hiding from many a careless eye
The scorned load of agony.’

SHELLEY.

BREAKFAST was late at the Lyndons’ the next morning. Tom, who, the evening before, had crept from his retreat and had stolen up to bed as soon as his brother was out of the way, had passed a sleepless night. He was feverish and restless, and did not make his appearance. Kate and Fanny were waiting, when Philip came down looking rather weary.

‘Where is Tom ?’ asked his sister.

‘I don’t know ; I have not seen him. He’ll be here directly, I dare say.’

They drank their first cup of coffee, and then, as he did not come, Fanny asked Philip to ring, and she inquired of Jane where he was. On hearing that he had not been seen, she sent upstairs in search of him. Jane soon returned, saying that Master Tom did not want any breakfast.

‘He must be ill,’ observed Kate.

‘It is very strange,’ said Fanny, and she went upstairs. When she came down she said that Tom looked very poorly, and complained of having a headache.

‘You had better go up and see him, Philip.’

Philip replied that he would, if Tom did not come down soon. Fanny looked rather keenly at her brother, but he did not meet her gaze.

‘What have you been doing to him, Philip?’

‘Oh, I gave him a good thrashing last night,’ replied Philip, who, anxious as he was to make his confession of penitence to Miss Ainslie, had no intention of doing so to his sister.

‘Oh, Philip! Why did you do that?’ cried Fanny, while Kate looked at him in surprise and sorrow.

‘He vexed me,’ was the reply.

‘I’ll tell you what, Philip,’ replied Fanny, angrily; ‘if you knock Tom about in this way, he shall not stay here. We must see whether

Uncle Tom can make some arrangement for him. Poor motherless boy!' she added, and the tears came into her eyes.

Philip started up, and muttering something about not wishing to be lectured, he left his unfinished breakfast and went into the surgery. Fanny, in the meantime, took some tea up to Tom, and made him drink it. Under the combined effects of the tea, and of his sister's sympathy, Tom soon felt better. He got up and went into the surgery, looking ill enough, however, to make his brother feel very uncomfortable. Philip did not give Tom much to do, and then he mixed some medicine for him, telling him, not unkindly, that if he would take it and then lie down for a time, he would soon be better.

Master Tom, however, who was brooding over his wrongs of the previous evening, pushed the glass away from him so hastily, that he upset it, spilling the medicine, while the glass rolled on the floor and was broken. Tom set off out of the surgery instantly, and then, finding that he was not pursued, he paused to consider whether he should go and lie down or not ; but, actuated partly by his wish not to encounter Philip again at present, and partly by his great dislike to acknowledging himself to be poorly,

he decided in the negative, and bent his steps toward Mrs. Mansfield's.

Harry was out when he got there, but he was glad to sit down and rest. He had not waited many minutes when Blanche entered the room, having come with a message from her brother to Stanton.

'My dear boy! What is the matter? How ill you look!' she exclaimed, struck both by the paleness of his face, and by its expression.

Tom replied that he did not feel very well.

'Has your brother seen you?' she asked, alarmed. 'Harry will run for him directly.'

'No, no. I don't want to see him; I hate him.'

'Tom, you must not say that,' said Blanche, horrified at his words.

'I do,' replied Tom, doggedly.

'What is the matter, Tom? What has he done?' she asked, fearing she knew not what.

'Why, you see,' said Tom, 'he was very angry last night. There was a lady with him in the consulting-room. He was sent for in a great hurry for an accident, and I waited for him outside, thinking he would be sure to set off here directly he had done with her. Well,' continued Tom, 'they were having a quarrel. I did not go there to listen, though I suppose

he thought I did, and so I caught it when he came out.'

'My poor boy!' said Blanche, pity for Tom and indignation against Philip mingling in the tones of her voice. 'Tom,' she continued, after a pause, 'you had better not talk about this, or you will do your brother more harm than you know, and I dare say he is sorry now.'

'I don't want to do him harm, I am sure,' replied Tom, a little sulkily; 'and as to his being sorry, if he is, it will be the first time, I think. At any rate, I don't want to see him.'

Harry and Stanton entering at this moment, Blanche gave the latter her brother's message, while the former, on hearing that his friend was not well, suggested that he should go with him to see whether the ice was thick enough for skating.

Stanton, noticing Tom's white face, observed that it might be better for him to keep quiet; but that young gentleman, prompted by his dislike of giving in, as well as by his wish to accompany Harry, said that perhaps the air would do him good.

'You had better go with them, Stanton, to see that they do not get drowned,' said Blanche.

‘I don’t think the water is deep enough for that,’ observed Harry.

‘We could find a suitable place or two, if it were desirable,’ replied Stanton. ‘But I think I had better go, if it is only to see after Tom,’ he added, ‘for he does not look as if he were equal to taking care of himself.’

They set off together, but Tom’s strength soon gave way, and they left him sitting on the rail at the side of the foot-bridge, while they went on to try the ice, which they found, however, rather thin. They were coming back, and had nearly reached Tom, when he gave a sudden reel, and fell on the ice, which gave way beneath him. Stanton rushed forward and pulled him out of the water in a moment, the stream at this point not being more than two feet deep.

‘How was it, my dear boy?’ he asked.

‘Somehow, my head seemed to turn round,’ replied Tom, who was shaking violently.

With Stanton supporting him on one side, and Harry on the other, he managed to reach the town; but as they were passing up the Walks, with the object of not attracting more attention than was inevitable, Tom became so faint that Stanton was obliged to stop with him at his mother’s. Stanton took Tom into Harry’s room, helping him to undress and dry himself,

when he saw something that made him not only sorry but angry ; and he despatched Harry to summon Philip, who was just setting off into the country. Stanton met Philip at the door, and told him how Tom had been, and of his fall into the water. He watched Philip's face intently while he was speaking to him, and its expression did not satisfy him.

‘ I don't know whether you are aware,’ concluded Stanton, ‘ that your brother has been severely beaten.’

‘ Yes, I am,’ replied Philip, frankly, ‘ for I did it. Something happened last night which annoyed me very much. I caught Tom, as I thought, doing something very mean, and I took the opportunity of giving him a lesson. I believe I was mistaken after all, and I am very sorry that I did it, but I was very angry at the time.’

It was a mortifying confession to have to make, and the expression which Philip saw on Stanton's face did not tend to soothe his feelings ; neither did the way in which his brother shrank from him as he approached the side of the bed. After a rather gruff remark to Tom—that if he had taken the medicine, and had been quiet, as he told him, he would have been better, and a few questions to which Tom gave

rather short answers—Philip turned to Stanton, saying that he would bring the carriage round for Tom in half-an-hour, when that young gentleman resolutely refused to go.

‘You will have to, if I come for you,’ replied Philip, sternly.

On Stanton, however, begging that Tom might remain for a day or two, Philip replied, that if Stanton wished to keep him, he was welcome, but that it was a pity that he should be bothered with him.

Philip mounted his horse, and set off on his rounds, with his mind occupied by no very agreeable feelings. It was exceedingly annoying that this should have come out just when he was so anxious to make a favourable impression. He had little doubt that Blanche would hear of it, also that the cause of his vexation had been surmised by Tom, and would be duly related to the Mansfields, and by them to Blanche; for he felt that they were all noting his attentions to her with watchful eyes. He thought of what would be Blanche’s indignation against himself with feelings almost of despair. He felt how difficult it would be to efface the impression that his conduct had made, as neither Blanche nor Stanton would know what aggravation he had had; indeed

they would set down the incident of the interview, if they should hear of it, seriously to his disadvantage. Neither would they know how grieved he was on his brother's account, and how angry he felt with himself for what had occurred. He had not meant really to hurt Tom, but to give him a lesson which would be useful to him in the future; though, under the impulse of passion, he had gone considerably beyond what would have been Tom's due, had he been guilty, which Philip had now no doubt was not the case.

It was late when he returned to dinner, and he found a message awaiting him, requesting him to go to the curate's lodgings. For the first time since he had known her, he shrank from meeting Blanche. He dined alone, to his great relief, for he was in no mood to talk. His father was gone out for the evening, and Fanny, who had been very anxious about Tom, on finding that he did not appear at the hour of dinner, made inquiry in the surgery, and hearing that some medicine had been sent to Mrs. Mansfield's for him, had proceeded there with her cousin.

Philip sat over his dinner considerably longer than was necessary, thinking; but the only conclusion he came to was that he wished the

curate had waited a week or two before he had been ill.

‘However,’ he thought, as he took his way slowly along the Walks, ‘it does not matter, for I may be in a worse mess by that time.’

He had rightly divined the tenour of Blanche’s feelings towards himself, but of the bitterness with which they were mingled he had no suspicion. She had left her aunt’s house that morning with her heart full of tender sympathy with Tom, and of a feeling which almost amounted to abhorrence towards Philip.

She felt angry, too, with herself for allowing her feelings to have been wrought upon on the previous evening. A man who was capable of such an act deserved, she thought, no pity. She had no difficulty, now, in steeling her heart against him; and the conjecture which rose in her mind with regard to Tom’s suggestion¹ as to the cause of his brother’s anger inspired her with a sentiment of disgust, that bordered on aversion and was not lessened when Stanton came in, later in the day, and gave her the further news of Tom.

Philip’s first glance at Blanche told him of the change. He was powerless before¹ her. The link, however slight, which had held her

to him was broken—by his own hand, too. He made no attempt, either by look or manner, to protest against her verdict, or to claim any relaxation of her sentence on him. His words were brief and his manner was curt and gruff—even a little sullen. As he went away, any one who had listened to the young surgeon, as he swung to the garden-gate with a bang, might have heard a muttered oath. After he had finished his work in the surgery, he retired to his own room, where, sitting at the table, and leaning his head upon his hands, he remained till a late hour of the night.

Stanton, in the meantime, had told his mother all that he knew about Tom's misfortune, adding that he thought they had had almost enough of the Lyndons, except Tom, who was the best of the family, and worth all the rest put together. 'Though there is very little chance of his being worth much,' he added, 'if he stays there long.'

'I think that Miss Lyndon is rather nice,' observed Mrs. Mansfield, 'but I have not seen much of her.'

'There is one good which I hope will come out of it,' continued Stanton, without noticing his mother's remark about Fanny, 'and that is that I should think Blanche will be thoroughly

disgusted with young Lyndon, and that she will see what he is, for she seemed rather to take a fancy to him, I thought.'

'Well, that will, as you say, be a good thing,' replied Mrs. Mansfield. 'I am sure I should be very sorry to see her married to *that* man; besides, what would George say to it? I hope that now he will make up for lost time, as this may give him a little better chance.'

Stanton felt some inclination to suspend his judgment that they had seen enough of the Lyndons except Tom, when he went up in the evening to see the invalid, and found his sister and cousin there. Though he remained only a short time in the room, he was there long enough to be struck with Fanny's tender affection for her brother. Stanton thought how much more interesting she appeared now that she was allowing her natural affections to have free play, than when she was coquetting with George on the previous evening.

Philip came early to Mrs. Mansfield's the next day. He was evidently in rather a softened mood; and some of Tom's resentment towards him had died away, though he still eyed his brother rather askance as he came into the room.

'Are you better, Tom?' asked Philip.

‘ Oh yes, rather; but my head is bad yet.’

‘ You had better come home to-day, Tom.’

‘ I don’t want to,’ was the answer.

‘ Because I am there ?’ asked Philip.

‘ Well, you know, Phil, you don’t make me like to be with you.’

Tom, notwithstanding his fear of his brother, never shrank from stating his sentiments towards him frankly, whenever he was challenged.

‘ Well, Tom, I did not mean to hurt you, and I am very sorry that I did it, but it was through a mistake; and I was very angry at the time.’

‘ Phil, I think the next time you are angry, it would be as well if you were to tell me first what it is about before you do anything.’

‘ I think it would,’ replied Philip; ‘ and you must forgive me this time, Tom.’

‘ All right, I will, on condition that I may stay here a day or two longer. Do let me stay, Phil; you don’t know how I ache all over.’

‘ Well, you may if they ask you; but they’ll soon be tired of you.’

‘ Oh, they’ll be sure to ask me.’

‘ They were obliged to ask you yesterday, when you said that you would not go back. I

should have been ashamed if I had been you, Tom.'

'I wish we had nothing worse than that to be ashamed of, Phil.'

'So do I?' was the reply.

'I say, Phil, I hope that lady is not going to come again.'

'I hope so, too,' said Philip, as he turned away.

'I shall get up presently, Phil.'

'Well, don't forget your medicine ; and if you feel inclined you may walk as far as our house.'

'No, thank you. Besides, I am awfully stiff, I can tell you ; and my head's dreadful.'

'Here's a wonder!' cried Tom, when Stanton came to ask how he was. 'Phil says he's sorry, and he owned it was a mistake, so we are going to be friends again.'

'I am sure you are more forgiving than I should be,' thought Stanton.

'And he says I may stay here a day or two, if you will ask me,' continued Tom.

'I am sure we shall be very glad,' replied Stanton, smiling. 'You may tell him so, if he asks.'

'It was wonderful, Phil acknowledging that he was sorry,' resumed Tom. 'But he has been kinder, lately, till last night. I hope that lady won't come again.'

‘What lady?’

‘Some lady who came and made him very angry. I thought I told you of it. Oh, it was Miss Ainslie that I told, I mean ; but don’t say anything to Phil about it.’

‘I shall not say anything to *him*,’ replied Stanton. ‘It’s very well you did tell *Blanche*,’ he thought. ‘I hope Mr. Phil has done for himself in that quarter.’

Tom soon got up and came downstairs. At first, in spite of his head being ‘dreadful,’ he showed some inclination to be tricky ; but that soon passed off, and he was glad to lie on the sofa while Harry read to him from a book of adventures. When medicine-time came, and Harry was going to pour out the dose, Tom asked him to bring the bottle ; and taking out the cork he smelt it, saying what nasty stuff it was. Then, limping to the window, he opened it, and poured the contents of the bottle into the garden.

‘What are you doing, Tom?’ cried Harry.

‘Oh, it’s no good,’ was the reply.

‘A fine doctor you are,’ said Harry, who admired the daring character of the deed, though he felt rather doubtful of the correctness of its morality. He went on with the reading, however, without stopping to speculate on the sub-

ject, until Tom became so tired that he was obliged to be consigned to bed again. Fanny and Kate came and stayed some time with him, the former expressing very warmly to Mrs. Mansfield her thanks for the kindness of herself and the others to Tom, and her fears that he would be troublesome to them. Mrs. Mansfield suggested that the young ladies should spend the following evening with them, and then they would help them to look after him, to which the cousins readily agreed.

They came at the appointed time. Tom was quite lively, and all of them joined to amuse him, till Fanny remarked that he would be quite spoilt with so much kindness, which, however, Stanton said never spoilt any one. Tom announced that he should like uncommonly to live at Mrs. Mansfield's, and that he thought he should leave off doctoring and turn lawyer; though, on second thoughts, he did not know whether he should, for Phil said that all lawyers were rascals.

George, at this speech, gave Tom a glance that he did not admire, though he did not trouble himself much about it. He thought that if George were not a rascal he need not mind; and if he were, he deserved to be told of it. The fact was, he had forgotten George's presence.

The Misses Lyndon both sang and played well; and as they were gifted with considerable conversational powers, which were the most distinguished by liveliness on the part of Miss Fanny, and by sound sense and culture on that of Miss Kate, the evening passed away pleasantly enough, with the exception of a little flirting that took place between Fanny and George, and which did not please Stanton. Contrary to Fanny's expectation, he did not offer to escort them home, but left that duty to George, who performed it with great gallantry.

‘She’s too much like her brother for me,’ thought Stanton, as he went upstairs to bed. ‘There is something about both of them that attracts one in spite of one’s self; but I believe Tom is the best of this part of the family, at any rate.’

CHAPTER XXI.

ADVICE.

‘I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
Which falls into mine ears as profitless
As water in a sieve.’

SHAKESPEARE.

SINCE Tom's disaster Fanny had shown her displeasure at Philip's conduct to him by the words, few and sharp, with which she had addressed him ; and when she drew from Tom, rather reluctantly on his part, a relation of what he thought was the cause of Philip's punishment of him, her vexation was considerably increased. Kate made several attempts both to soften Fanny's resentment against her brother and to get Philip into a more cheerful mood of mind. Fanny said that she knew her brother was miserable, and she was glad that he was,

for he did not deserve to be anything else. Philip, on his part, avoided, as much as possible, all intercourse with his own household. He came down late to breakfast, and did not appear at luncheon. At dinner-time he was generally absent, returning from his rounds long after the appointed time.

Kate had determined that she would, if possible, before the termination of her visit, have a little conversation with Philip, and use what influence she had with him to bring about a better state of things; but the difficulty was to find the opportunity. On the morning of her departure, however, when Fanny was engaged in a conference with Jane on household matters, she returned to the breakfast-room, in the hope of a last chance of speaking to her cousin.

‘Good-morning, Kate,’ he said, as she entered; ‘and I suppose I may say good-bye, too. I am sorry you are going.’

‘So am I, Philip,’ she said; ‘and I am sorry to have seen so little of you.’

‘Well,’ he answered, ‘things have gone wrong, as they generally do at our house, and always will, I suppose.’

‘I don’t see that, Philip.’

‘I don’t see that it can be otherwise.’

‘But, Philip——’

‘Now, Kate, are you going to lecture me? because I get enough of that from Fanny.’

‘I am not going to lecture you; but I want to talk over things a little.’

Philip’s face had hitherto worn rather a brighter expression than it had done lately, but there came a cloud over it at these words.

‘Don’t look like that, Philip.’

‘Oh, Kate,’ he said, ‘if you knew how worried I am, you would not wonder.’

‘I want to help you to put things in a better state,’ she said.

‘It is of no use; it can’t be done, Kate.’

‘Tell me what it is, and perhaps I may be able to help you.’

‘I cannot!’ he said, while a flush passed over his face.

There was a short silence, during which Philip played with his fork in a kind of nervous impatience.

‘Philip,’ said Kate at length, in a low but clear and gentle tone, ‘whatever your difficulties may be, if you set yourself seriously to discover what is the right path, and follow it resolutely, you will get through them in time, or some of them at any rate.’

Philip shook his head.

‘It is all very fine talking about the right path, Kate,’ he said; ‘but I got into a dreadful mess at college, from which there is no way out.’

‘There is a right and a wrong way, Philip, in every case,’ she said earnestly, ‘and I should like to feel that you will choose the right one.’

‘I have been trying to do better, though perhaps you may not think that I have shown it,’ he replied gloomily.

‘I was glad to hear that when I first came,’ she said kindly; ‘and I hope, Philip, that you will be more patient with poor Tom.’

‘I have been very wrong about him, but I think this last affair has cured me. You may trust me with regard to Tom.’

‘I am glad to hear that; but I wish I could help you. I shall be very anxious, Philip.’

‘Don’t say a word to Fanny,’ he said eagerly.

‘Oh no, Philip, I will not; but I cannot help thinking that I could do something.’

‘No, Kate. I must bear my own burden; and don’t trouble about me. I shall pull through somehow, I dare say.’

‘Tell me if you do.’

‘I will promise that.’

At this moment the door opened, and Fanny entered.

‘I could not think where in the world you had hidden yourself,’ she said to her cousin, ‘and here you are, having a *tête-à-tête* with Philip;’ then, turning to her brother, she added, a little sharply, ‘If you are going to make a practice of having all your meals an hour or two behind the proper time, Philip, we shall have to get another servant, so you had better make up your mind and let me know.’

Philip drank up his coffee, which had been getting cold during the time that he had been talking to his cousin, and went into the surgery.

‘How grave you look!’ remarked Fanny, as soon as her brother was gone. ‘Has Philip been making a declaration?’

‘Declaration! No, indeed.’

‘He was promising something just as I came in, at any rate; was it to mend his ways?’

‘No, it was not that.’

‘Well, I wish he would do it; but I have not much faith in him. I expect he’ll get just like father. He’ll be a treat for somebody to manage.’

‘He will never be as bad as Uncle Philip, I am sure,’ said Kate. ‘Whatever he becomes,

he will always have some generous impulses, and some intervals during which better feelings will have sway over him.'

'Well, I think you are right, Kate. He has not such a hard nature as father. I expect Miss Blanche has given him the cold shoulder, and that is what he is in the dumps about. I think, if he had a grain of sense, he would never have expected her to give him anything else; but I suppose people have no sense when they are in love, and that is how it is.'

Philip had missed Tom very much in the surgery, both in the work and in the atmosphere of life and vivacity which he diffused around him, whenever the surrounding circumstances were not of an unusually depressing nature. Harassed in mind as Philip had been by the events of the last few days, he had felt severely the strain of the burden of the daily, and oftentimes nightly, duties devolving upon him, and he welcomed Tom's return with unusual satisfaction.

Each visit which Philip paid to Victoria Terrace seemed to increase the gloom which weighed upon him. Blanche maintained the same manner which she had assumed on his first visit, and there seemed to be no likelihood of her relenting. These opportunities of seeing

her, which might have been so delightful, were, Philip thought, really a disadvantage to him, as they constantly reminded Blanche of what had passed on that unlucky evening, the impression of which might otherwise, by this time, have considerably faded, if she could not yet have entirely forgotten it.

Philip's manner had not been quite so gruff, though it was still curt enough to be anything but pleasant; and when Blanche met the momentary glance of his dark eyes, there was more of temper and resentment in their expression than there was either of tenderness or of penitence. He seemed to be quite changed, and Blanche was very well content that it should be so. She was relieved from the attentions and importunities of one whom, as she said to herself, she could neither respect nor love; though she sighed as she thought of how different he might have been.

Mr. Lyndon had not been at all well for some time, but he nevertheless insisted upon giving a gentleman's party, in spite of the remonstrances of his son, who was very anxious that it should be put off until his father should be better.

Both of the Mansfields had been invited, but Stanton stayed away, partly because he had little taste for such festivities, and partly in dis-

gust at the Lyndons. George came, however, to Philip's annoyance ; and the Carringtons and their guests happening to form one of the subjects of conversation, George took that opportunity of irritating Philip ; he went as far as he dared, doing it more by tone and manner than by anything that he said.

Philip, however, to Mansfield's surprise, controlled his temper more successfully than that gentleman expected ; and, fortunately, a summons to see a patient afforded Philip a chance of escaping from his tormentor, of which he took advantage for a very much longer time than was necessary. On his return he found, to his great relief, that the guests had departed ; the party having been broken up owing to the increased indisposition of Mr. Lyndon, who required his son's attendance during the remainder of the night.

Fanny was exceedingly vexed when she heard from her brother, the next morning, of her father's illness. She had put off her own party on his account, and now she should be obliged to delay it for an indefinite period ; and it was all the more provoking, as Mr. Lyndon's illness had been brought on by his own self-indulgence.

CHAPTER XXII.

CARRINGTON HALL.

‘ With the shaft in thy bosom borne,
Thou must hide thy wound in thy fear of scorn ;
Thou must fold thy mantle that none may see,
And mask thee with laughter, and say thou art free.’

HEMANS.

WHEN Philip returned home one evening he found a card of invitation to a dinner-party at Carrington Hall. On Fanny's saying that of course he would go, he replied that he did not know. He was rather silent at dinner-time, and he was glad to be alone afterwards, that he might think it over. His first impulse was not to go, because he knew that Mrs. Gordon would be there ; but as the remembrance of her visit came over him, her parting words that she should see him soon again rang ominously in his ears ; and he thought that it would be

better to face the enemy in the open field, than to wait to be hunted down in his own domain, or to be attacked from some unexpected quarter. He knew, also, that if he went not, Mrs. Gordon would think that it was because he dared not, and that George Mansfield, who was very likely to be there, he being Colonel Carrington's lawyer, would come to the same conclusion. A connection like that of the Carringtons was not to be despised, looked at from a worldly point of view. The Colonel was at the head of the sporting part of the community, and his wife was the leader of fashion of the neighbourhood. Any one whom they took up was sure to be patronised by many who aspired to be their peers, or to follow in their wake, and was sure to be the acknowledged fashionable doctor of the district. To slight the first invitation would, Philip felt, be very impolitic; especially as there had been some talk of Mr. Wood retiring from business, and a young and energetic successor might easily cut the ground from under his feet, if, by a more politic course, he should gain the ear of the Carringtons and their set. Disdained affection and wounded pride also lent their influence in determining him in his decision.

The Mansfields and the Ainslies might look

coldly on him, and watch his movements with suspicion. Why should he exclude himself from a circle higher than theirs—one, too, which would not scorn him for what they held so culpable, and from which their countenance and sympathy might have rescued him? It was by no means with a light heart that Philip arrived at this decision. The conjunction of George Mansfield and Mrs. Gordon was not at all an agreeable one; and intercourse with them must be fraught with annoyance and unpleasantness, if not with danger. However, he was not one to get clear of a difficulty by shrinking from it; and when the day arrived, and he took the direction of the Hall, he felt his spirits rise at the prospect of the encounter before him. To try his strength with his foes, and force them to let him hold his own against themselves, was, in some respects, congenial to his mood. He had been scorned and slighted; he had been obliged to submit to a sentence which he had no power to question; baffled, but not conquered, he longed to plunge into a conflict in which he could make his opponent feel his strength, and could bear down the latter by the sheer force of his own determined will.

On his arrival at the Hall, he was at first

rather quiet, making sure on what ground he stood, and ascertaining the bearings of his position. Mansfield was there, completely at his ease, the finished gentleman and perfect man of the world. Mrs. Gordon looked bewitchingly beautiful; she was exquisitely dressed, and radiant with smiles. Mrs. Carrington, who was a handsome, graceful woman, received Philip with marked and winning courtesy. She had been much struck with his appearance when she had met him in her country rides, and with the dashing grace with which he rode his spirited young horse. The Colonel was very friendly, introducing him to Major Gordon, an elderly gentleman of aristocratic but somewhat dissipated appearance, who seemed to take but a languid and *blasé* interest in all that passed.

Philip's instinct quickly told him what course to pursue to enable him to win the position which he desired. He was soon the life of the party. His quick wit; his epigrammatic sentences; the readiness with which he parried every attack; the sense of power that lay behind even his slightest utterance; added to the impression which was produced by his personal advantages, and the musical talent which he displayed in the management of a

bass voice of unusual power and richness, combined to make him a general favourite. George found himself, to his intense disgust, thrown completely into the background; while Mrs. Carrington expressed herself quite enchanted with their 'new friend,' as she termed him; and Mrs. Gordon lavished on him her sweetest smiles, and kept her softest tones for his ear alone. He received from his hostess a pressing invitation to be present at a grand ball which she intended soon to give. Mrs. Carrington's invitation was couched in terms that admitted of no refusal, and which left no doubt that he had gained a firm foothold in the favour of the inhabitants of the Hall.

There was not one among that gay company, except, indeed, Mrs. Gordon and George Mansfield, who could have guessed that, beneath the sparkling gaiety which that evening animated the manner of Philip Lyndon, was concealed a feeling of bitterness, and of almost desperate recklessness, which accorded ill with the scene around. It was early when he left the Hall, effecting his escape only in consideration of his father's illness, and he drove quickly home beneath the over-arching branches of the trees. He had exchanged the gay saloon, with its brilliant light, its gorgeous flowers, its lovely

forms, its laughter and its song, for the silence and the darkness of the night. The appreciative homage to his intellect, the tribute of admiration flattering to his vanity, intoxicating as had been the draught at the moment of success, seemed to pall upon him, even while the taste was yet upon his lip. The light had left his eye, and the smile had faded from his face, and he sighed deeply as he thought, that one approving look or word from her on whom alone he seemed to have no influence would have been more, a hundred-fold, than the delicate flattery or the open admiration of the most lovely of that gay company.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CONFESSION.

‘Since then at an uncertain hour
That agony returns ;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.’

COLERIDGE.

ONE morning, about a fortnight after the commencement of Reginald's illness, and when he had begun to make some decided improvement, Harry had come down to inquire after him, accompanied by Tom, and Blanche had set them to tie up some of the plants in the garden, which had been blown down during the night.

‘I am sure Phil is very unhappy,’ observed Tom, as he began to make a fresh point to the stick which had supported the plants, and which had been broken off close to the ground.

‘What’s that about?’ asked Harry, who was standing by, looking on, with his hands in his pockets.

‘About your cousin. He’s in love with her, you know.’

‘They’ll never let her have him, even if she wants to, which I should think she does not,’ replied Harry.

‘What will they say next?’ thought Blanche, who had lain down on the sofa to rest, and, the window not being quite closed, had overheard the conversation.

‘Well, I don’t know; Phil is not such a bad fellow after all, when he is not in a passion; I begin to understand him better than I did before.’

‘Do you?’ said Harry, in some surprise. ‘But I thought he was in love with the other lady?’

‘No, he ain’t.’

‘How do you know? Perhaps she is in love with him.’

‘Perhaps so. He said he hoped that she would not come again.’

‘That might not be true,’ suggested Harry.

‘Oh, it is; I know. Besides, Phil would not have said it if it had not been. He does not tell lies.’

'George does, sometimes, I am sure,' observed Harry.

'Well, he is a lawyer, you know,' replied Tom; 'and they are obliged to tell lies in their business, till I dare say it gets to come quite natural. I don't mean to fall in love at all,' he added, as he finished the point of his stick; 'it's only a bother.'

'A very wise resolution, Master Tom,' thought Blanche.

'What are you two about?' she heard Philip's voice say from the garden-gate.

'Doing as we are told,' was Tom's reply, as he drove the stick into the ground.

'That's a good thing, however. But I hope you were not talking secrets, because I could hear you all the way along the Walks.'

'Not our own, at any rate.'

'Your own, you monkey! What business have you with secrets?'

'I suppose you want Miss Ainslie?' said Harry.

'I want *Mr.* Ainslie,' replied Philip.

'Come in, then,' answered Harry, as he led the way. 'There's no one in—oh yes, there is,' he added, as Blanche rose from the sofa.

Philip had followed Harry so closely through the window, which opened to the ground, that

Blanche had no time to put on the manner with which she had lately received the young surgeon ; nor had he, misled by Harry's statement, assumed that reticence which he had been so successfully practising. Blanche, taken by surprise, held out her hand, which he had not touched since the night of the party. The colour rose on her cheek, partly from annoyance that she had thus lost ground which, unless by some very fortunate accident, it would be very difficult to regain, and partly from meeting the earnest gaze of Philip's eyes, which were full of what she could not but recognise as deep, true, and devoted affection. Harry had raced upstairs to see whether Reginald were awake, and he was down again directly, announcing that Philip might go up. He did not see Blanche when he came down, but he walked away with a more buoyant step than he had done lately.

Blanche, meanwhile, had gone to her own room, with her heart occupied with mingled feelings. She was considerably disturbed by this incident, for which she had been quite unprepared. She felt how insecure was the barrier which she had raised against Philip, if such a trifle should have enabled him to surmount it so easily ; and she was shocked at

herself for the pleasure, which she could not conceal from herself, with which she had beheld the ardent signs of his affection. She determined to keep out of his way as much as possible ; and Reginald having now begun to improve in health, there was no need that she should always see Philip, to hear his report or to receive his directions.

During the next few days Philip saw nothing of Blanche. She was harassed, and not very well, and being anxious to avoid his keen scrutiny, had kept out of his sight.

She had just lain down in the drawing-room, one evening, thinking that as it was rather late he would not come, when he was announced.

‘Were you lying down? I am very sorry that I disturbed you,’ he said tenderly.

‘Oh, it does not matter. Reginald is tired, and is gone to bed. He was asleep when I was up, just now.’

‘It would be a pity to disturb him, then,’ said Philip.

She hoped that he would go, but he remained standing beside the sofa. The gas was not turned fully up, and as she stood with her head drooping a little, he could not very well see the expression of her face ; but he could perceive that an unusual glow was upon her

cheek. There was an awkward pause. She was puzzling herself to think of something to say, which would induce him to go, without treating him with discourtesy; and he was debating whether or not he should venture on a bold stroke, which might either make or mar his position. He thought that, at any rate, he would first feel his way a little.

‘May I speak to you, Miss Ainslie?’ he asked.

The colour on Blanche’s cheek faded.

‘Mr. Lyndon,’ she said, ‘I think you have no right to ask it.’

‘I do not ask it as a right, but as a favour.’

‘Have you a right to ask such a favour?’

Blanche had taken herself severely to task for her own feeling towards him, and she had resolved to grant him no grace, and to hide the weak place in her heart by an extra show of firmness and determination.

‘Am I, then, so base and worthless as to be utterly out of the pale of your sympathy?’ he said.

‘I do not intend to say that,’ she answered.

‘You do not mean to say it, but you think it,’ he muttered.

‘No, I do not think it.’

She felt that, however far he might have gone

astray, there was still something noble about him; but whether the future course of his life would be an upward or downward one, she could not divine. She glanced at him as he stood before her, subdued and humble, with his face expressive of deep and troubled feeling.

‘Must I go, Miss Ainslie?’

Blanche was silent. She felt that she could not bid him go, and yet, what would be involved in the permission to stay which even her silence would give him? As she did not speak, he took her hand, and with gentle force made her sit down on the couch, and then he took his place beside her.

‘Miss Ainslie,’ he said, ‘I do not wish to press you, either to do or say anything that you do not wish, but I hope that you will have patience with me while I explain my position. I feel that it would be dishonourable in me to keep from you what you ought to know.’

Blanche had a great repugnance to being made the recipient of any confidences which must be limited to herself alone.

‘I should like to tell Stanton or Reginald anything you tell me,’ she said.

Philip was silent for a minute.

‘You might tell Stanton—if the time should come when——’ he stopped, ‘when you would

give me leave to hope. I do not ask that now,' he added mournfully. 'I hardly know how to make you understand the difficulties in which I am involved,' he continued, after a pause. 'Though you know the task which I have set myself.'

'What is that?' she asked.

'It is what we were speaking of on the night of that party.'

'Somehow, I thought that was all gone by,' she answered.

'I suppose you thought that I could not keep to it through coldness and scorn, Miss Ainslie?' he said bitterly.

'I could scarcely think that what you said was actuated by anything more serious than the passing mood of the moment, Mr. Lyndon,' she replied, 'when I heard of what had taken place only an hour or two before.'

Philip was silent for a minute.

'I have no defence to make, and no excuse to offer, Miss Ainslie,' he said, at length, 'except that, at that moment, I had been tried almost beyond endurance. Perhaps I deserved your condemnation, but it was not the less bitter for that.'

'I don't see how I could do anything but condemn you,' said Blanche.

‘Would repentance, deep and bitter, cause you to reverse your judgment?’ he asked.

‘True repentance,’ she replied, ‘would preclude the possibility of such wrong in the future.’

‘You thought that I was hypocritical in what I said that night, Miss Ainslie?’

‘I did not think that, exactly,’ she answered.

‘Will you judge me by the future?’

‘I must wait for that,’ she thought, glad of the respite that this would involve. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘I will judge of your repentance by the future.’

‘I shall not be able to reach your standard, Miss Ainslie,’ he said.

‘My standard is no impossible one,’ she answered.

‘Perhaps not to one who set off, at first, in the right direction,’ he replied. ‘I doubt whether you will be able to appreciate my efforts,’ he added, after a slight pause, ‘or to make allowance for my shortcomings, unless you know a little of my past. I do not wish you, Miss Ainslie, to think of me as either worse or better than I am.’

There was a few moments’ silence, during which Blanche wished earnestly that Stanton or some one would come in to put an end to

the interview. There was no sound, however, but the moaning of the wind outside.

‘I will give you,’ resumed Philip, ‘a few facts connected with the history of a medical student, which will illustrate my case. He was introduced by a friend to a gay young officer, who invited him to his house, where he became a frequent visitor. The mistress of the house was a lady of exceeding beauty.’

‘Was she the sister of the officer?’ asked Blanche, as he paused.

She remarked that he did not speak of her as his wife.

‘No. She had eloped with him, but it was generally understood that she was not his wife. Well, after a short time had passed, she sought the love of the medical student, and he allowed himself to be led away by her. His friend, himself a lover of the lady, betrayed him to the captain, who accordingly waited for him one evening in the garden. The captain was excited with wine at the time ; he attacked the student, and in the struggle they both fell into the river which flowed at the bottom of the garden.’

‘Were they drowned?’ asked Blanche, breathlessly.

‘The captain had grasped the student so

that he could not free himself,' continued Philip. 'The danger was that they would sink together. The medical knowledge of the student placed his opponent's life in his hands. He followed the instinct of self-preservation. The officer sank, and the student escaped.'

'Did he tell you this?' asked Blanche. 'What had you to do with it?'

'I was that medical student.'

Blanche started from his side in horror.

'Oh, Mr. Lyndon!' she cried, with a face from which every trace of colour had departed.

'Can I be forgiven?' he asked, in quivering tones, and with the agony of his mind depicted in his countenance.

'Ask forgiveness of God, whose laws you have broken,' replied Blanche, in a faltering voice. 'Perhaps He will find a way for you.'

At this moment was heard the sound of the dining-room door being opened, and the next, Stanton's step approached the archway that divided the two rooms. Blanche started forward and passed the half-drawn curtain, just in time to prevent his coming in; she tried to draw it behind her, but her cousin had set his foot upon it, and it did not move.

'Blanche!' he exclaimed, 'what is the matter? You look like death.'

He led her to the easy-chair, and, going to the sideboard, poured out a glass of wine, which he made her drink, and which revived her a little.

Philip, in the meantime, sat still, like one stupefied. He had not time to think whether or not he should follow Blanche, when her sudden faintness made it impossible for him to present himself without his being associated with its cause, and that would have been very unpleasant for both of them. If by any chance Stanton were to enter that room it would be very awkward. To get by the half-drawn curtain without being discovered, would be next to impossible; besides, there was the noise which the opening and closing of the door would make. The window seemed to be the only resource; and Philip took his hat, which lay upon the floor, and going gently to the window, unfastened it. The noise he made was very slight. He opened it and then stood still, feeling that he could not leave without hearing that Blanche was better.

‘What was it, Blanche?’ he heard Stanton ask, in an anxious tone.

‘I felt faint all at once,’ was the reply. ‘I shall soon be better.’

‘You look wretchedly ill. Have some more wine.’

‘No, thank you. I feel better now.’

‘I believe Lyndon has worried you,’ said Stanton.

Philip waited to hear the answer, but none came. Blanche had heard the click caused by the unfastening of the window, and she hoped that he was gone.

‘I hope he has done for himself now, Blanche.’

Still there was no answer.

‘I suppose he will be trying again soon,’ Stanton continued; ‘and if he does, Blanche, you must really send him to the right-about.’

‘Stanton, I am sure I do not encourage him.’

‘I hope you’ll make him understand that, then. I suppose he does not mean to take a refusal; but, Blanche, this is not at all like you, especially after all you have heard about him.’

Philip wondered whether there was anything in the expression of Blanche’s face that suggested Stanton’s last speech.

‘Don’t worry me about him now, Stanton,’ Blanche said.

‘Well, I can’t make it out. Is there not some kind of understanding between you and Lyndon?’

‘No, Stanton ; but I am sorry for him.’

‘He understands that, I suppose ; and you understand that he loves you—is that it ?’

‘Stanton,’ said Blanche, deprecatingly.

‘Well, I shall have to see what Reginald says when he is better. I dare say that Lyndon is a very ardent lover, and knows how to make fine speeches and all that kind of thing, and I cannot help thinking that you——’

A slight movement on Stanton’s part warning Philip that his position was somewhat equivocal, he opened the window and stepped carefully out upon the grass. It was perfectly dark outside, and it required some caution to steer clear of the obstacles which the garden presented. Once he caught his foot and stumbled, but recovering his balance he reached the gate in safety. When he gained the Walks he breathed freely, and he turned round to note, between the trunks of the trees, the light from the windows of the house which he had just left.

Miserable as he felt at that moment, he yet experienced a feeling of relief. Ever since he had known Blanche, the sense of his secret had pressed upon him with a weight which at times had become well-nigh intolerable. During every moment of his intercourse with her, it

had been present to his mind. The consciousness that sooner or later it must be told, and the fear of how Blanche would regard him when she knew it, haunted him continually. Once or twice before the words had been upon his lips, but the opportunity had passed, and they had remained unspoken. Now that it was done, he felt that he was not seeking Blanche under false colours. He had taken off the mask, and after the self-abasement which he had experienced in feeling that she had no idea how guilty he really was, it was almost a satisfaction to realise that she knew the worst. But even while this thought occupied him, the question forced itself upon his mind, what would be the nature of the feelings that this revelation must produce in her. Would detestation of his sin overpower every other sentiment, or would pity for what she knew he must have suffered soften her feelings towards him? He felt as if he scarcely dared to acknowledge to himself, as the meaning of Stanton's words, that she had an interest in him beyond what mere pity would have dictated. It seemed too much to hope, especially at such a moment; and the impression might have been falsely conveyed to Stanton by her agitation of manner consequent upon his confession: and yet there

had been something in her tone, in speaking to her cousin, which helped to give colour to the supposition. The next instant he beat back the suggestion as one not to be indulged in, lest, should it prove fallacious, the disappointment would be far worse to endure than any mere deprivation of hope could be.

After a little more conversation with his cousin, Stanton had departed, forgetting to inquire after Reginald, and also to deliver a message that his mother had sent to Blanche.

As he proceeded up the Walks, he gave several very grave shakes of the head, and he arrived at home with a more cloudy brow than was at all usual with him.

Blanche, in the meantime, sat long where Stanton had left her. Her thoughts were all in confusion. The sense of Philip's guilt weighed upon her with an intolerable oppression. Why had he done such things? and why should she have to bear the burden of his sin? She felt what a noble life his might have been, had he but kept the path of right, with his energy and his abilities, his generous impulses, and his deep affections, which had remained strong and fresh through all.

The hero of Blanche's imagination had been some pure Sir Galahad, whose calm and holy

love she could trust with perfect confidence. Hand in hand they would pass, she had thought, through life's trials, scarcely feeling them in their peaceful happiness. Their tasks, their pursuits, the objects of their lives, would be the same. Together they would comfort the sorrowful, tend the sick, and raise the fallen from the mire and dust of life. But here had come this man with his passionate love, and laying it at her feet, had refused to be sent away, until, in spite of his fierce temper and his sin-stained soul, he had so touched her pity by his love and his unhappiness, that she could not cast him off. To rebuff him now would be harder for her than ever. To scorn the penitent, almost at the moment of his confession, would, she felt, be impossible, and to allow him hope for the future would be equally impossible. But surely, she thought, he could not urge his suit for a long time to come; though she had no doubt that he would find ways of showing his affection which would expose her to remark from the outside world, and would lead to interminable misunderstandings with her brother, and with the Mansfields. Altogether it was a miserable state of things, and one from which she could see no escape. Her position with regard to Philip was ex-

tremely equivocal and embarrassing, and it seemed as if nothing that she could do would make it more satisfactory. How to baffle Stanton's questionings she was quite at a loss to know ; and he was sure to confide his misgivings to his mother, to say nothing of George and Reginald. Blanche's heart sank within her when she thought of the perplexities and difficulties which beset her path, and all on account of a lover whom she had done everything in her power to dismiss, and whom she had not the slightest idea of encouraging with regard to the future.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BROKEN ROSE-TREE.

‘Let it suffice thee, that I trust thee not.’

AS YOU LIKE IT.

THE next day, about noon, Mrs. Mansfield despatched Harry to take the message to Blanche which Stanton had forgotten. Harry, instead of going down the Walks to Victoria Terrace, proceeded in the opposite direction, until he reached Mr. Lyndon's, or ‘Tom's,’ as he often called it, to ascertain whether that young gentleman could accompany him.

When in quest of his friend, Harry generally made his approach to the house with a caution that he thought befitted the occasion. Even when Philip was not out of temper, his decided and occasionally trenchant manner and way of speaking produced an effect on Harry which

made him desirous of keeping as much as possible in the background. His first move was generally to pass on the other side of the Walks, taking a survey of the premises, and noting whether there were any signs of Philip's presence. If the horse happened to be waiting, Harry would retire to a safe distance, and wait till the enemy was out of the way. On this occasion, however, neither horse, Philip, nor Tom was to be seen. With regard to the latter gentleman, it often required no little ingenuity to discover his whereabouts, even though he should be close at hand, so that Harry sometimes had recourse to whistling, which, however, he never adopted except as a *dernier ressort*. In the summer Tom would often lie extended on the grass in the garden, in imminent danger of being tumbled over by any heedless walker there; or he would perch himself in one of the trees in the Walks, until, to his great disgust, the policeman got into the habit of casting his eye up among the branches of any likely tree in that neighbourhood, and the indignant youth had to take refuge in one of the trees in his father's garden, which, however, were scarcely of large enough proportions to allow conveniently of the various fidgetings and wriggings in which Master Tom indulged.

As the trees cast their leaves, their branches were exchanged for the roof of the house, which, on account of its porches and gables, was easy of ascent, and afforded convenient places of retreat for Tom when he wished 'to be quiet ;' in which mood he very seldom found himself, except when Philip had given him some task to master which required more than usual concentration of mind, and which he knew must be accomplished with that thoroughness from which his brother never excused him.

In winter these corners became a treasure-house of snow, and a convenient place for the manufacture of snowballs ; besides being an advantageous position from which they could be discharged at the medicine-boy, or at any servant-maid who might happen to come with a message.

Tom, before he indulged in this interesting pastime, invariably took the precaution of ascertaining that there was little danger of his proceedings coming within the range of Philip's eyes, and he kept a sharp look-out all round to guard against surprise.

Harry's eyes had scanned in vain every place that he could think of where his friend might be. He then gave a low whistle, which had the desired effect, for the next moment

Master Tom's head was seen to rise from a secluded corner of the roof, which had the double advantage of being screened from the wind, and of being slightly warmed by the contiguity of the kitchen chimney.

Tom commenced a rapid descent, holding the book which he had been studying in his mouth, for the sake of having both hands free. Harry then preferred his request for the pleasure of his friend's society, to which Tom replied 'All right,' opening the surgery-door as he spoke, and flinging his book into an unoccupied corner.

Now it happened at Victoria Terrace that Reginald, on coming down that morning, went into the drawing-room, and walking to the window, looked out into the garden, when he discovered that a favourite rose-tree, which he had bought on purpose for his landlady, was lying levelled with the ground. Inquiries were instituted at once, but of course no one had done it, or knew anything about it.

Blanche had little doubt that Philip was the culprit, he not having seen it in the darkness. It was at this unfortunate moment that the two boys appeared; and while Harry was delivering his message to Blanche, Reginald was catechising Tom about the rose-tree.

He and Harry had been in the garden on the previous evening just before dusk, but Tom stoutly denied that he had done it. Harry said the same ; and they both maintained that they could not have broken it without knowing, for the stick which supported it, and which was broken too, was strong and firmly fixed.

Reginald believed Harry at once, but he was very suspicious that Tom had not told the truth ; and he did not hesitate to let that young gentleman infer what he thought, though he forbore to accuse him directly.

Blanche was exceedingly annoyed, and she tried in vain to soften down the unpleasantness. Tom showed a warmth of temper that shocked both the curate and his sister, and he marched off with Harry, in high dudgeon.

‘ Does he think that I should tell a lie about a paltry rose-tree ? ’ he cried, in hot indignation.

Harry sympathised heartily with his friend about the unjust accusation, but he thought that he had shown a little too much impatience in the way in which he had repudiated it.

‘ Well, he would not like to be accused of being such a sneak,’ replied Tom, who had been especially irritated by the manner in which the accusation had been made. He would rather have had a cuff and a sharp word from Philip,

who had a right to correct him if anybody had, than be subjected to the measured tones and the incisive manner with which Ainslie had conducted the examination.

They had not proceeded far when they met Philip, into whose ear Tom poured the tale of his grievances. Though Philip felt sorry that his brother should have got into trouble on his account, he was rather inclined to laugh at the ludicrousness of the incident.

‘Well, it is an unfortunate business,’ he said, smiling. ‘Ainslie did not box your ears, I suppose?’

‘No, but I had rather that he had, and had done with it,’ replied Tom, ‘for he will be looking askance at me for a long time to come.’

‘Oh, if you would like to have a box on the ear,’ said Philip, laughing, ‘I can give you one; and Harry too, for that matter.’

‘No, thank you,’ replied Harry, shrugging his shoulders.

‘I don’t want one particularly,’ said Tom.

‘You are sure you did not do it?’ asked Philip, laughing again.

‘Quite sure,’ said Tom.

‘Well, I believe you, at any rate; and perhaps that will do almost as well as if the curate did. What did Miss Ainslie say?’

‘She believed us, of course,’ was Tom’s reply.

‘I thought she would. Well, I don’t know how you are to find out who has done it, I am sure. I think Mr. Ainslie had better have a watchman in the garden.’

The boys laughed so heartily at this suggestion, that Philip went on his way, thinking that Tom had partially got over his vexation.

Blanche was considerably surprised when, on seeing Harry later in the day, he gave her an account of the conversation.

‘Really,’ she said to herself, ‘he has impudence enough for anything.’

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CONVERSAZIONE.

‘Who loves me must have a touch of earth.’

TENNYSON.

THE *conversazione* was a grand success. The Mansfields and the Lyndons sent stereoscopes, microscopes, and engravings, while pictures and various little artistic trifles, besides a profusion of plants and flowers, were sent from the Hall. The speeches were as good as could reasonably be expected, and as they usually are on such occasions ; and the music every one agreed was beyond criticism. Mrs. Gordon’s performance was brilliant and not too long, and the songs and glees were pronounced to be incomparable.

Reginald, though he was not sorry to be obliged to be absent himself, would not hear of

his sister staying away on his account. She had, at the commencement of the project, promised to take her part in the singing, and to help with the accompaniments; and such an engagement was held by Reginald to be a sacred one, and not to be broken except in case of extreme necessity. The party from the Hall was there, evidently in a humour to be pleased with everything.

Blanche had begun to think that Philip was not coming; indeed, the order of the programme had to be changed, as he did not appear at the time at which he had been appointed to take his part; and Blanche heard Mrs. Carrington say that she could not possibly sing that duet without Mr. Lyndon. He came, however, just as every one had given him up. Blanche saw that his eyes sought her out at once, and he bowed; he could not get near enough to speak without disturbing the arrangements of the musicians.

After the duet, he took an opportunity, when he could do so without attracting attention, of coming to speak to her. Blanche could not help wondering whether he was anxious not to attract the notice of the Hall-party towards her, or whether he was possessed by a wholesome fear of George and Stanton, who were watching all

that passed with observant eyes. During the short interval which then took place, Blanche moved to speak to some friends, and on finding her place filled up, she took a vacant chair at the side of the platform, close to Mrs. Carrington and Mrs. Gordon.

She was watching for an opportunity to return to the neighbourhood of her cousins, who, engaged in an argument with a friend, had not discovered her movement, when the Rector commenced his speech. Stanton then looked round for her, and would have given up his seat to her, but she nodded to him an intimation of her wish that he should remain quiet, which he accordingly did. Philip was sitting on the edge of the platform, talking to Mrs. Gordon and Mrs. Carrington. Blanche managed, by edging her chair a little farther back, to get out of the line of his vision, which was intercepted by the figure of Mrs. Gordon, who was dressed in the extreme of the fashion, and in a style which Blanche could not but condemn.

The Rector's speech afforded a convenient opportunity for private conversation, especially as the piano, which was at the end of the platform, partially concealed them from the general public. Blanche was forced to be an unwilling listener, as it was impossible to leave her seat

without making some disturbance, which would have been out of place during the Rector's speech.

Mrs. Carrington began by reproaching Philip for being so late, to which he replied by saying how busy he had been ; but Blanche could not judge from his manner whether his delay had been caused by business, or whether it were merely an excuse.

'Is not the Rector a dear old man?' asked Mrs. Carrington; 'and he preaches such charming sermons. Don't you think so?'

'I really know very little about him,' was Philip's reply.

'Do you not go to church?'

'I do sometimes.'

'I have never seen you.'

'He used to be naughty about not going to church,' observed Mrs. Gordon.

'I have not time,' said Philip.

'You have time for what you wish to do, I expect,' returned Mrs. Carrington.

'Going to see "Somebody," for instance,' remarked Mrs. Gordon.

'Who is "Somebody"?''

'He won't confess. We shall have to ask some one else.'

'We shall expect a full confession when he

next comes to the Hall,' said Mrs. Carrington. 'Shan't we, Belle?'

'Of course we shall.'

'I will have one ready, if you wish it,' rejoined Philip.

'A false one, you deceitful man!' returned Mrs. Gordon. 'What is the next song?' she asked, looking at the programme. "'Love Not.'" Very good advice, I am sure, especially where you are concerned. I hope the ladies will all follow it.'

'Now, that is too bad,' cried Mrs. Carrington. 'Is she not cruel, Mr. Lyndon?'

'Dreadfully,' replied Philip.

'Well, I know him better than you do. Who is to sing?'

'My sister, I believe,' replied Philip.

'The young lady we have seen in Mr. Howard's pew?' asked Mrs. Carrington; 'and that handsome boy who is with her sometimes is your brother, I suppose? He is very like you; I have quite taken a fancy to him; he is a charming boy, I am sure.'

'He is well enough,' replied Philip.

'He is a better boy than you were, I dare say,' said Mrs. Gordon.

'Is your father better?' asked Mrs. Carrington.

‘Yes, thank you.’

Blanche had heard from Stanton that Mr. Lyndon’s illness was a slight attack of *delirium tremens*. She felt how ashamed she should have been had she been in Philip’s place.

‘And how is Mr. Ainslie?’

‘He is better, too.’

‘I wonder whether he would like some grapes, or has he plenty?’

‘The Mansfields keep him supplied, I expect,’ replied Philip; ‘but that poor man who was hurt on the railway would be thankful for them.’

‘I will send him some,’ said Mrs. Carrington. ‘And you cut off his leg, you horrid man!’

‘I did it to save his life,’ he replied. ‘I wish to speak to you about him, if you will allow me, when I come to the Hall.’

‘Certainly,’ she answered. ‘I hear a sad account of you from the poor people.’

‘Indeed! What do they say?’

‘That you are very cross with them; gruff, I think, was the term that I heard the oftenest.’

‘Well, they are enough to aggravate a saint, sometimes.’

‘Much more you,’ rejoined Mrs. Gordon.

‘They tell me that you are very kind, nevertheless,’ said Mrs. Carrington.

‘Oh, well, that is better.’

‘You make a wound with one hand, and put on a plaster with the other,’ observed Mrs. Gordon. ‘Have you plasters for every kind of wound, Mr. Lyndon?’

‘No, I have not, Mrs. Gordon,’ he replied.

‘You are quite sentimental, Belle,’ said Mrs. Carrington.

‘You are not going?’ asked Mrs. Gordon, as Philip moved a little.

‘No, not yet.’

‘I shall have to play soon,’ she said; ‘you must turn over for me.’

‘With the greatest pleasure,’ he replied gallantly.

The Rector at this moment finishing his address, Philip went to fetch an ice for Mrs. Gordon, and then he held her bouquet for her while she ate the ice. As soon as he saw that her attention and that of Mrs. Carrington were engaged with George, he turned to Blanche.

‘I see that Fanny is going to sing,’ he said. ‘Are you ready to play the accompaniment?’

‘I would rather not,’ she answered.

‘Shall I play for you?’

‘Thank you; I shall be glad. Do you think that you could find a seat for me, near your sister?’

‘I dare say I can. I will try, if you will come with me.’

As they went, the Rector came up to them to hand Blanche on to the platform, and Philip explained that he was going to take her place. They met Stanton the next moment, and he had to be told the same thing. Blanche almost regretted that she had declined to play, as it involved so many explanations, but she wished so much to sit still and be quiet.

‘Your sister is waiting for you, Lyndon,’ said the Rector.

‘Will you find Miss Ainslie a seat near where my sister was sitting?’ asked Philip of Stanton.

‘Yes, if she wishes it,’ replied Stanton, a little suspiciously.

‘It was her own request,’ said Philip, sharply.

‘You are running away with Mrs. Gordon’s flowers,’ said George, who came up at this moment. ‘You’ll get into disgrace, Lyndon,’ he added.

Philip restored the flowers to their owner, and he was obliged to stay to apologise for his negligence, even though his sister was waiting all the time. The song passed off with great applause; and then came Mrs. Gordon’s per-

formance. She played splendidly. Philip did not look exactly amiable as he stood by her side, turning over the leaves for her. Blanche could not help thinking what evidence of natural force of character there was in the expression of his face, what strength of will, what energy and resolution, what capability to suffer and to dare. She knew what power he possessed of tenderness, and of deep and passionate affection. Surely it was hard, if, with all these noble qualities, he should be lost, because, for want of firm self-guidance, and in all probability of early moulding in a high moral atmosphere, he had missed the path in which he ought to have walked.

‘How beautifully Mrs. Gordon played!’ exclaimed Fanny, enthusiastically, as Philip handed that lady from the platform.

‘Splendidly!’ said George.

‘I don’t wonder that Reginald does not like the Carringtons,’ observed Blanche; ‘and I think that Mrs. Gordon is a horrid woman!’

‘That’s rather strong for you, Blanche,’ observed Stanton.

Blanche coloured with shame and confusion, as she felt that her cousins might fancy that her dislike of Mrs. Gordon had some connection with her evident flirtation with Philip.

‘I don’t admire her much, certainly,’ said Fanny.

‘She’s very fond of Lyndon,’ observed George, as Fanny turned away to speak to some one. ‘Married ladies,’ he added, ‘like to have admirers as well as unmarried ones.’

‘Better, perhaps, sometimes,’ replied Stanton, as he thought of the difficulties which Blanche’s pair of lovers had had with her; though he had an uncomfortable suspicion that Philip’s difficulties were gradually disappearing.

‘If Lyndon is not careful he will get into a mess,’ said George—‘that is, if he is not in one already.’

As Fanny turned round, he said no more. Blanche felt extremely uncomfortable. She could just see Philip doing the polite to Mrs. Gordon, as he was bound to do after handing her from the platform. Presently he left the lady, and stood with folded arms, and his back against the wall, at no great distance from their party. He did not stay there long, but made his way down the crowded room without speaking to any one.

It was a great relief to both himself and Blanche to get the first meeting over, after what had passed on the previous evening. That it had taken place in the manner in which

it did had prevented much of the awkwardness which otherwise both of them would have felt.

Philip was now very anxious to ascertain what was his position with regard to Blanche. Her manner had been gentle as was its wont, and she had shown no repugnance to him, but anything further he could not tell. How long might he not have to wait before he could obtain from her some sign, however slight, that his suit might be successful?

So full was Philip's mind of the image of Blanche, and of his hopes and fears with regard to her, that it was not until he was alone in the silence and darkness of the night that the full extent of the complications that Mrs. Gordon's presence in the neighbourhood might produce with regard to Blanche occurred to him. With George watching him on one hand, and Mrs. Gordon on the other, it would be very difficult to act so as not to arouse the enmity of both of them. He could not help thinking that both were watching for some opportunity of making him bend to their will—Mrs. Gordon that she might regain her old power over him, and George that he might put Blanche out of his reach, and also do him as much harm, in blighting his reputation, as was consistent with his

own immunity from danger. Philip did not know how far George would venture to go, but he knew that he had a wholesome fear of the vengeance which might come upon himself if he pushed his designs to too great a length.

Anxious as George was to separate him from Blanche, Philip knew that he would be equally solicitous to keep him from Mrs. Gordon, if possible. He felt sure that George, in accordance with his determination to maintain a character for respectability, would not dare to seek Mrs. Gordon openly, or to become very intimate with the Carringtons, even should he have a chance. He would be very jealous of his rival's visits there, though he might rejoice in the probable peril to his reputation which it might involve.

Altogether it was an embarrassing state of things, and one out of which Philip could not see his way. To be obliged to associate with either of his old friends was very repugnant to his feelings. To Mansfield he felt that degree of dislike, almost amounting to hatred, which his treachery had produced, and which the consciousness of the power the lawyer had over him, a power Philip knew he would exult in using, did not tend to diminish. Mrs. Gordon's presence inspired him with a disgust

that it was sometimes almost impossible to conceal, though he was prompted to do so, as much by a kind of chivalrous feeling to the woman whom he had once loved, as he was by considerations of policy.

The thought was ever present to his mind in his intercourse with her, that as he had allowed himself to share in her sin, he had no right to scorn her for it. Many hours of that night were spent by Philip in mourning over the past, and in vain regrets for the life which had been so wasted, and over which his own hand had cast such a blight of misery and shame.

/ CHAPTER XXVI.

CONSULTATIONS.

‘ My heart revolts within me, and two voices
Make themselves audible within my bosom.
My soul’s benighted ; I no longer can
Distinguish the right track.’

WALLENSTEIN.

ON Sunday evening Stanton, instead of going to church, made his way to Victoria Terrace, for the purpose of having a chat with Reginald, whom he had not seen during the last few days. He met Blanche going to church. She had not been out in the morning, not having felt well since the excitement of feeling she had undergone at the *conversazione* and on the evening before.

When Stanton arrived at No. 3, he had to listen to the curate’s account of the destruction of the rose-tree, and his suspicions of Tom

Lyndon's complicity in the deed. Stanton had heard of it from Harry, and he thought at the time that his cousin had been too hasty in his judgment, which view of the case he took this opportunity of presenting to that gentleman. Stanton could not tell whether he had made any impression, for Reginald would not own that his opinion was at all changed, and he brought up all Tom's delinquencies in the shape of snowballing, and sundry frolics during the decoration period, and on other specified occasions.

'Well,' observed Stanton, smiling, 'it is of no use being too hard upon boys' tricks. With the life and activity oozing out of their fingers and toes, they can scarcely keep from mischief.'

'A boy who is full of mischief,' replied Reginald, 'is not good for anything else. I am sure I never was like that.'

'You are of a different temperament.'

'It's all very well talking of different temperaments,' answered Ainslie, a little impatiently, 'but persons of every kind of temperament know right from wrong, I hope.'

'I want to have a little talk with you about Lyndon, Reginald,' said Stanton.

'What of him?' asked the curate.

‘He is too attentive to Blanche,’ was the reply. ‘She expressed herself quite strongly against him the other day, but she seems to have softened again somehow. I don’t know how it is.’

‘I asked her a few days since,’ answered Reginald, ‘how long he stayed when he came, and she said that he stayed scarcely a minute.’

‘Well, I don’t understand it at all,’ said Stanton.

‘She cannot possibly encourage him. That is quite out of the question,’ observed Reginald, decidedly. ‘Has he made her an offer, do you think?’

‘I don’t know, I am sure.’

‘I will ask her, and give her a little good advice, also,’ said her brother, ‘and we shall see what she says. I should have thought that he would have been the very last man to take her fancy. He is such a Turk.’

The individual in question had, in the meantime, been debating very seriously with himself whether or not he should go to church that evening. He expected that if he went he should see Blanche, and that his going would please her; perhaps, also, the effect of the service would be rather soothing; at any rate, it would be a step in the right direction. On the

other hand, both George and Mrs. Gordon might be there.

He decided to go, however. When he got there, he saw Mrs. Carrington and Mrs. Gordon, but there was no one in Mrs. Mansfield's pew. It was not very long before Blanche entered the church, and, to Philip's great relief, she was alone. He settled himself conveniently so that he could not see Mrs. Gordon and could see Blanche, who was very pale, except when, occasionally, a flush passed over her cheek ; but whether that was caused by feeling or by indisposition, Philip could not decide. He occupied himself not very profitably, during part of the service, with wondering whether he could manage to walk home with her.

At the conclusion he instructed Tom to accompany Fanny, as he was going somewhere ; and as soon as Blanche had cleared the crowd in the immediate neighbourhood of the church, he hastened after her.

'I was glad to see you at church, Mr. Lyndon,' she said, as he walked by her side ; 'and I hope that you will attend regularly.'

Philip replied that he meant to go sometimes.

'I certainly don't admire your friends at the Hall,' she observed.

‘They are not your sort of people, Miss Ainslie.’

‘Are they yours?’

‘Not exactly.’

‘Not at all, I hope.’

‘Mrs. Carrington is very kind indeed,’ he replied; ‘and I hope that she will be a useful ally in connection with my intercourse with the poor. I want help, and she wants a little practical guidance. If I can give her the one, and she can give me the other, it will be an advantage to both of us.’

Blanche thought, that if the conversation between herself and him had oftener been on such topics, it would have been much better.

‘I know that she is good-natured,’ was Blanche’s answer; ‘but I do not like her manners.’

‘She is a little free, but I do not think there is any harm in her.’

Blanche was silent. Philip was very much afraid that her next remark would relate to Mrs. Gordon.

‘One cannot always choose whom one would most associate with,’ he continued, ‘or *you* would have no reason to complain of what my choice would be, since I knew you, Miss Ainslie; but your friends are so much afraid of

mixing with those whose habits and whose tastes are not quite in accordance with the ideas of their own set, that they are, I think, a little accountable if some are driven to seek different society, who would otherwise avoid it.'

Blanche thought that, in this case, there was some foundation for his censure ; and yet, that, but a very short time since, she should have raised her voice against admitting to the circle of their intimate friends any one like the gentleman at her side.

'It is very difficult to know what is right,' she said ; 'and very difficult to do it, when one does know—much more so than I used to think.'

'If *you* find it difficult, how much more must I,' answered Philip. 'But I don't see that it is a question of right at all. I thought that it was one of prejudice.'

'It is not prejudice. You do both Stanton and Reginald injustice there.'

'I don't see that.'

Blanche could not very well explain, that to keep the moral atmosphere of a home fresh and sweet, the only way was not to admit within its precincts one who would be likely to taint its purity.

Philip instinctively divined something of

what was passing in her mind ; and a bitter sense of humiliation and mortification kept him silent for some minutes.

‘ And you share in those feelings ? ’ he asked, at length.

‘ I cannot go against them, Mr. Lyndon,’ she replied, evading his question.

‘ You do not wish,’ he said, almost fiercely.

Blanche did not answer.

‘ Forgive me for speaking so,’ he pleaded. ‘ Blanche, I would lay myself at your feet, for you to do with me what you will ; only do not scorn me.’

‘ I do not scorn you, God knows,’ she murmured.

She had intended to speak to him gentle words of peace and counsel, and this was how it had ended. She felt keenly, at that moment, how impossible it was to have any satisfactory intercourse with him.

They had reached the end of the Terrace, where they paused for a moment. Stanton at that juncture came out of the house. Philip walked quickly away, and Blanche hurried forward.

‘ Was that Lyndon ? ’ asked Stanton.

‘ Yes.’

‘You want some one to take care of you, Blanche,’ he said, as she went in.

Blanche lingered in her own room till she thought her brother would wonder what she was doing; and then she went downstairs slowly. Reginald was lying on the sofa in the drawing-room.

‘Come here, Blanche,’ he said.

She went and sat down on a low chair by his side.

‘What had Stanton been saying to him?’ she thought.

‘Has Lyndon made you an offer?’ he asked.

‘He did, some time ago.’

‘And you refused him unconditionally?’

‘Yes, Reginald.’

‘And he has since tried to induce you to reverse your decision?’

Blanche was silent; she could not say that he had not.

‘Has he not?’ asked Reginald.

‘Yes,’ she said.

‘And you remained firm?’

‘Yes, Reginald.’

Reginald wondered how it was that his sister had not mentioned the circumstance to him, as it would have been so natural to do.

‘If a lady were to refuse to accede to my proposals,’ he observed, ‘I should never mention the subject to her again.’

Blanche thought, that if Philip Lyndon could have been as easily disposed of, it would have saved a great deal of trouble to all concerned.

‘Blanche, I am afraid that you are not quite decided enough with him,’ said her brother.

‘I have told him ever so many times, Reginald ; and what am I to do ?’

Reginald could not help smiling.

‘I don’t know, I am sure,’ he said, ‘how he has managed to give you a chance of telling him “ever so many times.” I think the best way will be for me to dismiss him as well as you, and substitute old Mr. Wood for him. He will not be making love, at any rate.’

‘Reginald, I don’t see how you can do that,’ said Blanche, in some alarm.

‘Well, it seems that, as you cannot do your part, I shall have to try. I was very much obliged to him for saving your life the other day, but if he is going to worry you out of it now, he might as well have let you alone then.’

‘I am not going to be worried out of my life, yet,’ said Blanche.

‘Well, you have looked wretchedly ill lately, Blanche ; and Stanton lays it all to Lyndon.’

The colour rose in Blanche’s cheek, in a way that her brother did not like to see. She felt that she had been harassed almost beyond endurance, and she was afraid that there was no prospect of any cessation of her troubles.

‘Blanche, you cannot like such a man !’ said her brother.

‘I am sorry for him, Reginald.’

‘I am out of all patience with you, Blanche!’ exclaimed Reginald, angrily. ‘Sorry for him, indeed ! Sorry for a man who has such an ungoverned temper that he thrashed his brother within an inch of his life ; and whose character, if all I hear of him is true, is tainted by no common crime !’

Blanche was pale enough now. She felt how worse than useless it would be to attempt to defend Philip, or to seek to soften her brother’s feelings towards him.

‘I did not think that you had been so silly and foolish, Blanche,’ continued the curate. ‘Your conduct with regard to Lyndon argues a weakness of purpose, and, I am sorry to say, a wavering from the strict path of duty, which I had not expected from you, Blanche.’

These were hard words to hear from Reginald,

and they grieved Blanche, and brought the tears into her eyes. Weak and foolish, she owned to herself that she had been ; but as to wavering from the path of duty, she had not been able to decide permanently what that was, for what had appeared to be right one day, had seemed to be wrong on the following one ; and even when she had felt quite convinced as to what her duty was, she had not been able to carry it out.

‘I am sorry that you are angry with me, Reginald,’ was all that she could say.

‘I believe that you half like this Lyndon, after all,’ resumed her brother. ‘But you must remember, Blanche, that if our affections are drawn towards unworthy objects, as sometimes happens when we allow ourselves to be led away by vanity and false appearances, it is then our duty to crucify those affections, lest we lend ourselves to foolishness and worldliness. I am sorry, my dear Blanche, that you should have given way to such things, but I hope that you will bear your trial in meekness and patience.’

Blanche had listened to her brother's words with some impatience. She was not quite prepared to plead guilty to his indictment, which she thought had been brought against her without sufficient cause.

‘I think, Reginald,’ she said, with some dignity, ‘that you are taking too much for granted, and that you have no just ground for what you have said.’

‘Well, Blanche, I am very glad to hear you say that,’ replied Reginald, with great satisfaction. ‘I have been judging by what Stanton told me. In this case,’ he added, ‘there will be no difficulty in getting rid of this troublesome lover of yours. I must say that I consider him rather impudent, to persist in his attentions when you have, as you say, given him no encouragement. But if he continues to act in such an ungentlemanly manner, we need have the less scruple in dealing with him; and if you cannot manage him, Blanche, I shall have to take him in hand.’

Blanche retired that night with a sinking heart. Could she but have felt sure that Philip would ever become worthy of her affection, she would have been sorely tempted to consent to a prospective engagement, to be fulfilled only after a satisfactory probation, and thus to put an end to a state of things which was becoming intolerable, which satisfied nobody, and which she could not persuade herself was right. Almost anything, that was not wrong, would, she thought, be preferable to the present arrangement, if any-

thing so indefinite could be so called, in which Philip was always pushing for what she could not grant him, and while he was almost reduced to despair by what he thought was her indifference, Reginald and Stanton were both possessed by the idea that she was drifting into an engagement which could but end in misery. George was now away on business, but Blanche had little doubt that on his return he would come to some understanding as to the relation in which they stood to each other. Blanche felt that her rejection of George would bring remonstrances from Mrs. Mansfield, and would involve explanations and questions that might be more difficult to parry than those of Stanton and Reginald had been. An engagement with Philip, could it have been entered into, would bring all these difficulties to a crisis, which, however trying it might be to pass through, would lead to a definite state of things, the aspects of which would not be always changing, like the scenes in a series of dissolving views.

END OF VOL. I.

